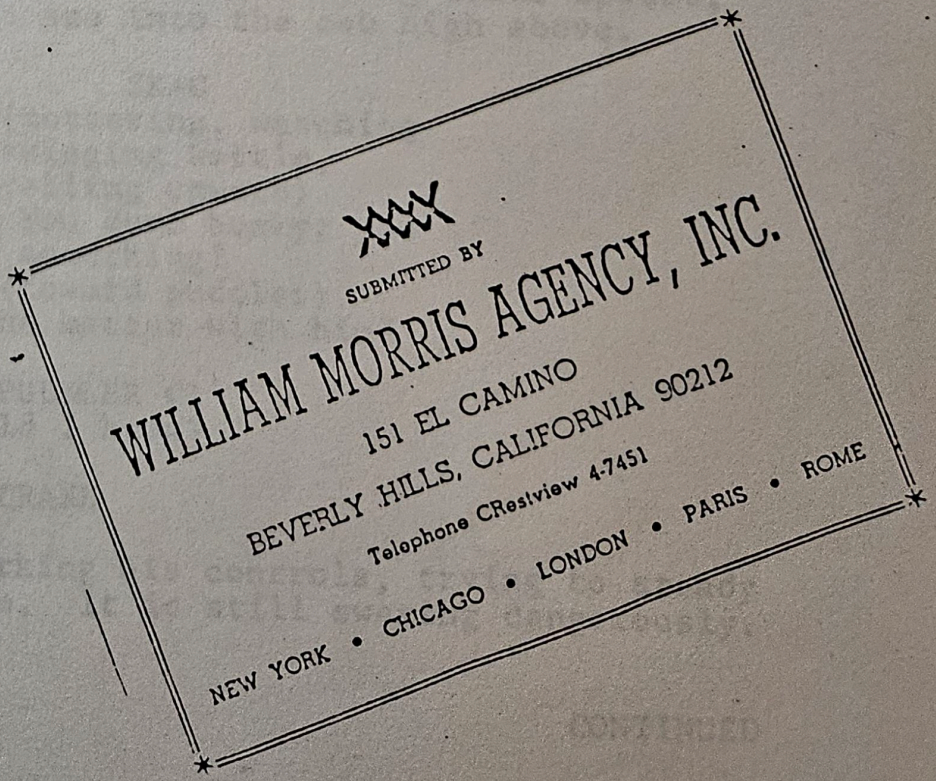
Abby Mann's

SKAG

(TVM)



INT. STEELMILL OPEN HEARTH - NIGHT

From the pulpit a high raised walkway, we are looking down on the open hearth, something out of the Inferno, The puddlers in fireproof leggings, apron and gloves, work amid fountains of sparks as the furnace is tapped. Down the line a Bessemer begins to scream; overwhelming, mindshaking sound like a great pipe organ racing madly up the decibles into sound beyond sound. Camera pans the progress of the overhead travelling cranes carrying giant kettles of liquid metal to be poured into the molds. One of the giant travelling cupolas is swaying slightly, moving jerkily.

Below on the hearth, we can see the puddlers milling around, all looking upward, apprehensively backing away toward the pulpit. They gather in a semicircle on the hearth floor, looking upward, getting from under the possible danger.

ANGLE TO SKAG

trotting toward camera, pushing men aside to reach the area. His chest, naked except for protective apron, sparkles with sweat, graphite and grime. He pushes up the black glass visor.

SKAG
What the hell's going on?
What's the matter?

There is a chorus of voices, all saying different things, all expressing ad lib confusion. Skag looks upward, craning his head to see into the cab high above.

SKAG
(muttering, watching swinging kettle, yelling upward)
Paczka! You dumb hunky; you drunk or something?
(toward puddler)
What's the matter with him?

PUDDLER #1
How should I know?

CAB OF TRAVELLING CRANE

The operator is working his controls, trying to steady the dangling kettle. It is still swaying dangerously.

CONTINUED

TO SKAG

giving it body English.

SKAG
Lower it! Not so fast!
Damnit, slow it down.

PUDDLER #2
(backing away)
Get out from under!

SKAG
Hit the brake!

PUDDLER #1
(muttering)
He's blown his cork... They
go crazy all day up there alone.

ANGLE TO DAVID

He has been working some distance away. He approaches his father anxiously.

DAVID
What's happening, Dad?

SKAG
Paczka!

ANOTHER ANGLE

SKAG
(yelling upward)
Don't touch anything! Just
leave it alone!
(aside to David)
If he can't keep the rhythm,
I'll put a black guy up there.
(watching Paczka
climb slowly from cab)
He's getting too old for the job.
They never know when to quit.

High above, Paczka makes a breaking sign with his hands and points toward the gantry.

PACZKA
Ratchet! Chain ratchet!

Again, he makes the breaking sign. The puddlers gather around Skag.

CONTINUED

PUDDLER #1
Being a hook man around here is suicide!

ANGLE TO GANTRY

The whole thing starts to buckle like a snake. SOUND of shop whistles beginning to blow madly. The rollers slow down and grind to a halt.

SKAG
(to David; tersely)
Chain ratchet's gone out.

DAVID
What are you going to do?

SKAG
We've lost the whole batch.
(turning away)
They'll have to cut it with torches to get it out.

A foreman hurries forward.

FOREMAN
The company can't afford to scrap that much steel.
(trotting to keep up with Skag)
Be reasonable, man. This is a government order - a thousand ton tool specification!

MOVING SHOT

as Skag stops, the men in a semi-circle around him.

SKAG
Where the hell is the shop steward?

The men take up the cry.

PUDDLERS (ad lib)
Hawkins...Shop steward...Where the hell is Hawkins!...etc....

SKAG
(to foreman)
You get a crew out here with torches. Well, what are you waiting for?

CONTINUED

An engineer in a short white coat comes trotting up to join forces with the foreman.

ENGINEER
There's got to be another way, Skag.
(pleading)
You know we're committed. This has got to be one continuous pour - no seams.

ANGLE TO HAWKINS, SHOP STEWARD

being pushed forward by the puddlers until he is face to face with Skag.

Skag ignores him for a second to answer the engineer.

SKAG
(pointing upward)
With that thing hanging there over my crew? You've got to be joking!
(turning on Hawkins)
You're the shop steward around here, Hawkins. You're supposed to represent the men - well, do it! Get that cleaned up!
(back to engineer)
The company'll have to meet minimum safety standards or we'll walk!

HAWKINS
The union contract won't let you walk in the middle of pouring!

There's an ominous muttering from the puddlers. David has to be restrained from swinging at the steward.

DAVID
You goddamn company fink!

FOREMAN
You'll be up before the Disciplinary Committee! I'm preferring charges!

SKAG
Screw you, and screw the union, too. They stopped representing us a long time ago. What the hell do they care what happens to us!

DAVID
(fuming)
There're just another big business.

ANOTHER ANGLE

as Skag walks away, the men following...

CONTINUED

Skag motions to the puddlers, starting away through their ranks.

BLACK PUDDLER
You call it, Skag Iron!

SKAG
I'm walking!

FOREMAN
You'll be brought up on charges!

Skag makes an obscene gesture with finger. Puddlers follow him.

SOUND OF WHISTLE BLOWING AND VOICES SHOUTING O.S.
Then there is the loud crack of breaking metal, the sound of grinding like a great rusty hinge overhead.

SKAG
Look out!

The puddlers scatter.

ANGLE TO KETTLE ABOVE

It has broken loose, hanging askew on its chain, swinging erratically, spilling a deadly liquid fire down on the floor of the hearth.

ANGLE TO GROUP OF PUDDLERS

trapped against the furnace. The liquid metal, still raining down, skittering like quicksilver, exploding on impact, is slowly creeping in on them.

TO SKAG

c limbing the metal ladder up to the raised sectinn called the pulpit.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Skag signalling the crane to lower a hook to the pulpit.
He picks up a short-handled sledge hammer and with his foot in the hook gives a signal to hoist away.
David appears and runs forward to grip the hook chain.

DAVID
I'll take care of it.

CONTINUED

SKAG
The hell you say. That's my crew.

He is swung aloft on the hook. We see him signal the crane operator to take him above the wildly swinging kettle and then lower him next to the defective ratchet.

CLOSE ON SKAG

hammering the rachet until it finally snaps back into place. The kettle rights itself, and the rain of liquid metal suddenly stops.

MOVING SHOT, SKAG

now being lowered back toward hearth floor. We hear the voice of a black puddler.

BLACK PUDDLER'S VOICE
Hey! You did your thing! Skag Iron!

CLOSE UP - SKAG

still descending on hook.

PUDDLER'S VOICE (O.S.)
(comradely ragging)
It's a bird, it's a plane...it's Skag Iron!

Skag looks down, smiling.

CUT TO:

EXT. SKAG'S HOME

Skag pulls up his car in front of his house. Most of the houses on the street that Skag lives on are interchangeable. However, his is more distinct than the others as though there has been a refusal on Skag's part to accept the fact that he is living in a community that has been built around the steel yards and where individuality is something to be hidden, not revelled in. Skag's house has a fresh coat of paint, a manicured lawn and flowers. There is also the beginnings of a workshop which Skag has begun to build. Skag sees something that makes his eyes light up, it's his son John's car.

SKAG
John!

(he bounds out of the door into the house)

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Skag runs up the stairs to John's bedroom. Skag looks around for John

SKAG
John!

SKAG'S POV

light on in the bedroom, goes up to the bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM

There is an attractive woman about twenty-three unpacking her valise on the bed, whose appearance is in direct contrast to what she is as a human being. She continually wears a wooden smile that hides the distaste she feels for being in East Pittsburgh and the domination and bravado of Skag.

AUDREY
(matter of factly)
Hello.

SKAG
(stopping)
Hello.

AUDREY
He went out with Barbara. I'm Audrey.

SKAG
He told me he was going to bring home a roommate, but I thought it was a guy.

AUDREY
I'm not a guy.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

resenting her flip attitude.

SKAG
(pauses)
Where are you going to sleep? I guess you can bunk in with one of the girls.

AUDREY
I'm going to sleep here with John. It's all right, isn't it, Mr. Skagzka?

CLOSE UP - SKAG

startled, amazed at himself that he is startled.

CLOSE UP - AUDREY

looking at Skag mockingly and amused.

SKAG
Sure.
(lamely)
You need anything? You need anybody to help you?

AUDREY
No, I'm fine.

SKAG
Where's my wife?

AUDREY
She's downstairs in the kitchen.

SKAG
I'll see you later. Make yourself at home.

Skag goes out of the room.

INT. HALL CORRIDOR - DAY

Skag runs down the stairs at a furious pace.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Jo, Skag's wife, is cooking dinner. Jo is about twelve years Skag's junior. She is a very handsome woman in her early forties, still sensual still with the kind of earthy vitality she had in her mid-twenties.

SKAG
I should have strangled them in the cradle.

JO
What's the matter?

CLOSE UP - SKAG

looks at Jo startled.

SKAG
Don't you mind? Don't you mind that she's going to be sleeping with him here in the same house with my father and the kids?

JO
I guess I do, but I was afraid to say so because someone might think I was "square".

SKAG
(scathing)
Well, I'm not "square". I mind it like hell, particularly since she thinks I would mind it.

JO
Maybe we're being too harsh. After all, what are you, a paragon of virtue? When you were a young man, you tried to lay anything that walked. I'll never forget what you said to me when I was working at Gray's Cafeteria. Raunchiest thing I ever heard. They wouldn't put it in a porno movie today.

SKAG
That was different.

JO
Why?

SKAG
At least I didn't ask your mother to sleep with you in your home. Where does she get off carrying around that superior attitude.

JO
John says her family has money. They're in the department store business.

SKAG
That explains it. I feel about her the way John L. Lewis felt about a small coal operator he met across the negotiating room. He said, "What do you think you're so special for? Because your family has a few dollars? I have a good mind to come wipe that silly smile off your face!"

Patricia, Skag's daughter, a very beautiful girl of eighteen, comes in. The kind of girl you see when you pass an industrial town while driving through that takes your breath away. She has been a drum majorette. She has had half of her high school class in love with her, but like most beautiful women, she wears her beauty uneasily. She doesn't quite know what to do with it and is always a little shaken by the fact that people don't want to speak to her and relate to her because of her beauty. She wishes more people would get to know her as a human being, and, since they don't even try, she wonders what she is as a human being.

CONTINUED

She goes to the refrigerator for a bottle of Tab. She is in a skimpy housecoat.

SKAG
Why are you doing walking around that way for?

PATRICIA
I didn't know that anybody but John's girlfriend and Mother were here. Since when did you become so puritanical?

SKAG
(dryly, with humor at his own expense)
I don't know. I don't want us running a house of ill repute here.

Patricia goes out of the room. Skag's father, Petar, comes in. He is in his eighties. Once a very vigorous man, he has been felled by a stroke and separated from life by partial deafness that hit him in his seventies. There is a great dignity about him and a usual pretense that he hears everything that is being said.

JO
You think you have troubles? He doesn't want turkey tonight.

SKAG
What's all this, Papa? You had turkey last Christmas. You liked it.

Skag sees that his father's fly is open. He zips him up. The old man mumbles something inaudible. Skag arranges his father's pants.

SKAG
(kindly, joking)
Can't have you exposing yourself... the girls might get ideas.

Skag leads his father to a comfortable chair and turns on the television set.

SKAG
There. Now you must take it easy and don't worry about the turkey. Barbara'll fix a couple of soft-boiled eggs.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

David, Joyce, Joh, Audrey, Barbara and Patricia sit in the living room waiting for dinner.

CONTINUED

John Skag, about twenty-four, is handsome and the apple of his father's eye. There is something cool and deliberate about almost everything about him.

JOHN
I'm sorry about Dad.

AUDREY
If I thought he was straight, I would have stayed at a hotel.

JOHN
There isn't anything decent outside of downtown Pittsburgh and it's fifteen miles from here.

AUDREY
I thought you said he could handle it.

David, who we have seen in the steel mill, Skag's eldest son. He is a product of Skag's first marriage, a disastrous one, and he resembles his mother strongly, a reminder that constantly opens up an old wound for Skag and causes him to be sometimes unnecessarily curt with his son.

Joyce, the young woman sitting with David, is an attractive woman with an enormously knock-out figure. She is working as a cashier in a restaurant and she and David have been living together for two and a half years. She has "street smarts" although she has no book learning and no interest in books either, or politics or art, which is a part of the wall that divides David from her. For while David merely works as a puddler in a steel mill and has chosen not to go beyond high school for his education, he is aware politically as is Skag and is, in effect, an intellectual although he works in a mill. Nobody argues more with his father than David. But, let anybody else criticize his father, however slightly, and he immediately rises to the defense and jumps down their throat. He feels as little sympathy for Audrey as his father does.

DAVID
I think it's expecting alot to ask him to "handle" a girl he's never seen before sleeping in the same room with his son, with the whole family in the house. His wife, two children, and an old man.

JOYCE
You're always protecting him from everybody else. I wish he was as protective of you.

DAVID
You don't know how he is about me. What the hell do you know how he is about me? You should have seen him in the plant today. He saved the whole crew's lives. A goddamned hero whether you know it or not.

CLOSE UP - BARBARA

Barbara, Skag's youngest daughter, is age fifteen and is about forty pounds overweight. She is the class "fat girl" since nobody can be as cruel as other children. The someone who is "out of the norm". Barbara's life at school is quite hell. She hates to go to gym class because she is the butt of other kids' jokes. She is sensitive, intelligent, possibly beyond any of the others in the family.

BARBARA
Can you help me get out by eight?

PATRICIA
How can I help you get out of here? You know how he is about holidays.

BARBARA
I have to get out by eight.

PATRICIA
I know. I know you have to get out by eight. But I may not be able to get you out.

Skag enters with a bottle of slivovitz.

SKAG
(to Audrey)
Here we are. Some for you?

AUDREY
Thank you.

He starts to pour.

AUDREY
So stingy, Mr. Skagzka.

SKAG
Have you ever tasted slivovitz?

AUDREY
No, but I've heard about it.
(pause, smiles)
I'm tough, really I am,
Mr. Skagzka.

Skag cheerfully pours some more slivovitz for her. John watches warily. Audrey drinks it down. She nearly gags on it but tries to control herself.

SKAG
(smiles broadly)
Burns, doesn't it?

He pours some for John.

SKAG
(to John)
Do you want your mother to serve you and Audrey breakfast in bed? Or how about a couple more of your college friends doubling up on the couch?

JOHN
(laughs)
You're not upset about my asking Audrey to stay over, are you, Dad? We're not living in the Ice Age.

SKAG
I'm not upset! Who said I was upset?!
(bitterly)
No, I think it's fine! Let it all hang out! I think you kids are doing great! Great!

Jo comes in.

JO
Dinner's ready.

SKAG
Let's get the show on the road.

INT. DINING ROOM - THANKSGIVING DINNER - DAY

The Thanksgiving is in full swing. Against conversation and the passing of plates and platters back and forth, Skag is helping to feed his father the boiled eggs, putting the spoon to his mouth.

SKAG
He's having trouble with his arthritis. Eat it slower, Tata. Don't eat too fast. Remember last time when you ate too fast you choked.

JOHN
(with concern; trying to put it diplomatically)
You know, Dad, it might be better to put Grampa some place like a nursing home.

PATRICIA
Don't talk so loud. He'll hear you.

JOHN
He can't hear.

PATRICIA
I'm not so sure.

JOHN
There's a good nursing home over in Oak Knoll. Modern equipment. If necessary, they can hook 'em up onto a life support system that monitors every vital organ twenty-four hours a day.

SKAG
(with irony)
Yeah. And another machine that tucks him in and kisses him goodnight.

Skag looks over at the old man. He begins to wipe a bit of food from his mouth. Petar immediately brings his own hand up with a great deal of dignity to show that he can take care of himself. Skag puts his hand over his father's hand.

SKAG
This old man raised me all by himself. When my mother died, he used to work all day and then come back at night to take care of me. He didn't put me in a home when I was young and helpless. I won't put him in a home now that he's old and helpless.

JOHN
I was just wondering if he wouldn't be better off with men of his own age.

SKAG
He doesn't think of himself as old. When you get to be his age, see if you want to rock with a bunch of old people in rocking chairs waiting to die.

David gets up from the table, takes the gin from the side table and brings it to the table.

SKAG
Lay off the booze. You've put away six since you came to the table.

DAVID
Is that all? I thought I was doing better than that.

SKAG
What's that supposed to be? Funny?

DAVID
I knew I should have fortified myself at Noonan's Bar before I came here.

SKAG
You think that's smart? You think it's smart to drink? Anybody can drink.

DAVID
I've seen you three sheets to the wind in my time.

SKAG
But not at home. Not at Thanks-giving.

DAVID
I thought that was the best time to drink.

SKAG
You're doing fine, you are, a man as bright as you are working in the yards.

DAVID
What do you want me to do?

SKAG
I told you I would send you to school, but no, you never wanted to go and now it's too late.

DAVID
Why is it that you and every second generation steelworker I know wants his child to have an education? What the hell is so special about education the way it's taught today? They tell you about Faulkner. But I know about Faulker. I love him. And I don't need any professor telling me why I should love him.
(looks about table)

CLOSE UP - PATRICIA

amused

CLOSE UP - BARBARA

smiling

CLOSE UP - JOHN

listening

CLOSE UP - AUDREY

looking at David with disdain.

DAVID
What else should I do? Be a lawyer? It's all a bunch of lies, they're all hired guns.
(more)

DAVID (cont'd)
Watergate proved that. Be a teacher? I don't have the patience. It's one thing you get by working with your hands. You know nobody is fooling you and you're not fooling anybody. You know you're really helping to keep this country going.

Phone rings. Jo goes to answer it.

SKAG
You think being in the steelyards is so romantic? Have you ever noticed Grampa's hands?
(holds up Petar's hands)
You want that to happen to you?

CLOSE UP - PETAR'S HANDS

His hands have been penetrated by steel chips that have rusted under the skin leaving tatoo-like marks. His hands are covered with these blotch marks.

CLOSE UP - DAVID

looks at hands, moved.

DAVID
What's the matter with them? I think they're beautiful.

JO
(covers receiver)
Patricia, it's for you.

PATRICIA
Who is it?

JO
Harry Lightner.

PATRICIA
You didn't tell him I was in, did you?

JO
No. I'm following your instructions. "I don't think she is in, but I will see."

PATRICIA
I don't want to speak to him, but be nice to him.

JO
She's got half of East Pittsburgh going around with hang dog expressions because they think they're in love with her.

Skag gets up, goes to phone.

SKAG
Hello, Harry? I know you've been calling the last five months. She's here but she doesn't want to talk to you. Go find yourself someone that likes you.
(pauses, wearily to Harry finally)
All right, but we have other things to do around here besides answer phone calls.
(hangs up, to Patricia)
That's what you do. You don't keep them on the hook. You let them know.

BARBARA
Dad, are you letting me go to the party I was talking about? The kids are making their own turkey over at Feehans where their parents are gone. It's going to be fun.

SKAG
It's Thanksgiving, dammit! And Thanksgiving is supposed to be spent at home. What the hell are you doing running all over the place at fifteen? Who do you think you are, Dolly Parton, or whatever it is? Who wants more dark meat?

JOHN
I'll have some.

SKAG
Coming up. You, Audrey?

AUDREY
Nothing, thanks. I've had enough.

SKAG
You haven't had anything. David?

DAVID
Yeah, I'll have some more.

SKAG
Good.

CONTINUED

JOYCE
A little more white.

SKAG
Well, have you decided what you're going to specialize in?

JOHN
Audrey and I have been discussing that.

Pause.

SKAG
(looks at Audrey with something less than sympathy)
Audrey and you?

JOHN
Yeah, she's sitting the finals, too.

SKAG
(stiffly)
Well, what decision have you and the young lady arrived at?

AUDREY
You have to be very careful, Mr. Skagzka. Socialized medicine is coming. You'll have to find some end of the profession that won't be affected by it.

SKAG
What's the matter with socialized medicine?

AUDREY
(laughs)
What's the matter with socialized medicine?!

SKAG
It strikes me that people are getting sick and tired of these high fees, rising hospital costs, and all that.

AUDREY
Look, Mr. Skagzka, you know how hard John is studying to be a doctor. It
(more)

CONTINUED

AUDREY (cont'd)
strikes me he's entitled to everything he can get just like everybody else.

(to Skag)
When it comes, psychiatrists and plastic surgeons won't be affected by it.

SKAG
First, let's ask John what he really wants to be - a psychiatrist... or somebody who makes people beautiful?

JOHN
Well, you see, Dad, everything is a gimmick these days.

PATRICIA
(amused)
I knew it was for used car salesmen but for doctors too?

JOHN
It's like everything else. For instance, they have a thing called the gastroscope to look at the stomach or up the rectum. They charge a thousand bucks a look. The gastro-endenologists are making a fortune. They're making two hundred thousand a year.

SKAG
Two thousand dollars a clip to look up a rear end.

JOHN
I was thinking of being a psychiatrist for awhile but you can only charge them seventy-five dollars an hour. That's only less than eight hundred dollars a day.

SKAG
That's a poverty wage to you?

JOHN
No, but people have been doing alot better. There's a guy there making a half million a year. He was in the bottom third of his class.

CONTINUED
CLOSE UP - SKAG
speaks quietly, but we can tell he's been hurt.

SKAG
Funny, the plans you make for other people without consulting them. The guys in the yards and I are very close. With all this inflation, they really get hurt if they or someone in their family gets sick. I always thought you might want to have an office here.

JOHN
(laughs a little)
Here? There would be no money here, Dad. Half the town is on Medicare and the others have insurance plans from the steel mills.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

looks at him, speaks quietly but obviously feeling it a great deal.

SKAG
I guess so. But you know, there are the givers and the takers in the world, and right now the takers have gotten the upper hand but things always have to balance out sooner or later. If you get too greedy, take without giving anything back, you will end up choking on it. I don't want you to be just a taker.
(to Audrey, hiding his distaste for her)
How about some more turkey? Would you like some light or dark meat, Audrey?

INT. PATRICIA'S BEDROOM - EARLY EVENING

Dinner is over. Patricia has called David and John to talk with them away from the earshot of their parents.

PATRICIA
I have to talk to you about Barbara.

JOHN
(already bored)
What about her?

PATRICIA
I have to talk to you about her.

JOHN
What about her? I don't see why she has to leave the house all the time.

PATRICIA
She's in trouble.

JOHN
You don't mean she's pregnant?

PATRICIA
I mean worse than that.

JOHN
(laughs)
What could be worse than that?

PATRICIA
Don't give me that supercilious laugh, John. I know you don't care about her.

JOHN
Who says I don't care about her? I just know there's just so much you can do for people.

PATRICIA
Well, let's see what you can do about this. Barbara is the best of any of us. The most sincere, most intelligent, and she goes to bed with every boy in her class. that wants to go to bed with her. And she's fifteen years old. She goes to bed with thirty-year old men. And sometimes she talks to me about suicide.

DAVID
Jesus Christ.

PATRICIA
Dad talked about finding birth control pills in her room. God, if he only knew. I don't know whether to laugh or cry. John, what are we going to do? You're a doctor.

JOHN
People have to work out their own things.

PATRICIA
You're not shocked by this, are you...not startled by it?

JOHN
No, I've known about it for a long time, but I'm wise enough to know there's not much I can do about it.

Jo walks by, looks at them suspiciously, enters room, stands by door.

JO
What are you talking about?

PATRICIA
Nothing.

JO
It's about Barbara, isn't it?

Pause.

PATRICIA
No, it isn't.

Jo gives them a meaningful look and goes.

CLOSE UP - DAVID

considering.

DAVID
I wonder if I should tell the old man.

INT. LIVING ROOM

David starts walking down the stairs.

DAVID
Dad, I'd like to talk to you about...

David sees Skag on the phone.

SKAG (into phone)
...don't tell me I shouldn't do it. It's all going up in smoke anyway. It's not real money anymore. It's Monopoly money.....I know you have things I should invest in, but I rather invest in my son. I'll pick up the check for the bonds tomorrow.

Skag sees David.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

looking at David guiltily, hangs up phone.

CLOSE UP - DAVID

a moment before he begins.

DAVID
You dipping into those bonds again?

SKAG
What are they for?

DAVID
John doesn't have to go to John Hopkins. He can go to some other school. He can get a scholarship at some of the others.

SKAG
I don't want him to go to the others. I want him to have the best.

DAVID
But you can't afford to give him the best. You've got a second mortgage on the house, car payments, there is Barbara and Patricia, and Jo. They need things.

Skag approaches him with suppressed fury.

SKAG
Has anybody ever wanted for anything around here? Have I ever missed a payment? Did you ever go hungry or miss a meal when you were eating at my table?

DAVID
No, but now you're fifty-six years old. You think you're twenty-five, but it's going to catch up with you one of these days.

SKAG
Why don't you straighten out your own life before you tell me how to run mine?

CONTINUED

CLOSE UP - DAVID

shaken

DAVID
My life is a mess. So what?

SKAG
Joyce is the third woman you've lived with in two years. You think that's smart? You think that's fair to her?

DAVID
Dad, all Joyce and I have going for us is sex and that's wearing thin.

SKAG
You're going to grow up a sour old man. That's what is going to happen to you and you think you're so damn smart.

DAVID
Forget about me. What's that got to do with anything? I don't like you skating on such thin ice the way everyone else in this country is doing. I wish I didn't care, I wish it didn't bother me, but it does.
(throwing up his hands)
Hell, you're such a bright guy in every other way!

CLOSE UP - SKAG

knows that what David is saying is the truth but doesn't want to listen to him.

CLOSE UP - DAVID

frustrated beyond words.

DAVID
Why don't you listen to what I say? If I was John, you'd listen! If I was Patricia, you'd listen!

SKAG
I don't know! I don't know why every time we start a conversation, it winds up in an argument!

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

Pause.

CLOSE UP - DAVID

DAVID
I know. I look too much like my mother.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

knowing what he means but denying it.

SKAG
What do you mean?

DAVID
Her family didn't think you were good enough for her because you were a hunky steelworker and she left you two months after you were married. It was the worst time of your life.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

remembering and knowing deep down there is truth in what David is saying but not wanting to admit it.

SKAG
I'm not that stupid.

DAVID
No? Then why did you let me live awhile with her, then with Grandma until you decided to take me in?

SKAG
We didn't have a big enough house.

DAVID
Is that it, Dad? I still remind you of her, don't I?

CLOSE UP - SKAG

realizing the truth of what David is saying. Skag cannot quite meet David's eyes.

DAVID
Don't I?

CONTINUED

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jo is finishing helping Petar to get dressed. He has on a stiff white shirt, string tie and sharkskin suit.

JO
(finishing tying tie)
There.
(she pats the tie a little)

CLOSE UP - PETAR

looks at Jo. It's obvious their relationship is a very close one.

JO
I'll get the others ready.

She starts downstairs.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Skag is talking with John. David stands by himself with a drink in his hand. Audrey, Joyce, and Patricia are in conversation.

JO
We'd better get ready if we're going to church. Grandpa's just about dressed.

Skag starts to vocalize in a low voice.

JO
Who else is going? The Grand Patriarch has come all the way from Chicago. It's a special mass.

CLOSE UP - PATRICIA

CLOSE UP - DAVID

his eyes wander around the room.

CLOSE UP - JOHN

looks up at the ceiling.

CONTINUED

JO
(dryly)
No, I didn't think so. What about you, Patricia? You always seem to have a good time when you go.

PATRICIA
Not tonight.

JO
(to David)
I suppose you'll be busy at the nearest tavern.

DAVID
(evasively)
I've got the six o'clock shift. You know how early I have to get up to be ready for it.

JO
(dryly)
Sure.

JOHN
Why do you always go, Dad? You're not all that religious.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

speaks quietly but feels it deeply.

SKAG
It has nothing to do with religion. When I was your age, I didn't want to go, too. My father made me go. I'm damn glad he made me go because it's part of me now and everybody has to remember where they came from.

JOHN
And best of all, he gets a chance to show off his voice.

DAVID
(laughs)
You can criticize Dad about anything except his voice.

SKAG
There was a Hollywood producer, a Serb from Belgrade, who came to the Steel Pier one night when I was singing and won a cup. He listened to me and wanted to put me in a movie with Mario Lanza.

JOHN
(laughs)
I've heard about that since I was twelve. Why didn't you do it, Dad?

PATRICIA
(dryly)
The producer must have lost his number.

Petar enters fully dressed.

CLOSE UP - PATRICIA

moved as she looks at him, goes to him and kisses him on the cheek.

PATRICIA
How handsome.

SKAG
You should have seen him twenty years ago. He was "mlad". Right, Tata? Used to drive the girls crazy.

CLOSE UP - PETAR

He is quite proud and pleased.

EXT. CHURCH

The Serbian community of Pittsburgh - they cling ferociously to and want traditions. Among the people there are, of

course, Skag, Jo, and Petar. Even though Jo is not Serbian, she seems to be well integrated into them, cares about them, and knows all of them by first name. Skag sees a particularly charming old lady who is dressed in traditional long skirt, white blouse, embroidered vest, and a black lace shawl on her head. Skag has a great deal of charm and particularly with old ladies, and he displays it now.

SKAG
Milena, you look like a little girl, mala devoka. Hey, Tata, why don't you take Milena out on a date? You and she can have a little slivovitz - you never know what can happen.

Petar and Milena laugh, embarrassed. Skag greets another choir member.

SKAG
Hey, Marko, don't sing too loudly today because you are always flat.

MARKO
What do you mean I'm always flat?

SKAG
Yeah, that's right. You always ruin it for everybody else.

MARKO
So I'll cut off my balls and then I'll be a tenor in a different section and you won't hear me.

SKAG
Your wife will never know the difference.

INT. - SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

The inside of the church is very austere. There are twin tapestries of St. George slaying the dragon on both sides

of the altar. There are stained glass windows representing different saints of the Serbian Orthodox Church, St. Sava, St. Nikola, St. Jovan, and others.

On the platform in front of a Byzantine screen, the priest starts the litany, intoned by his assistant at his right.

CAMERA MOVES TO CHOIR, consisting of twelve people, including Skag, who answer the litany.

Skag sings loudly in the chorus, enjoying the chance to participate in something in the church. From the background comes the sounds of Marko singing flat.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

closes his eyes in agony, repressing a fury. He cannot help his temptation to turn andglare at Marko but he continues singing now in euphoria, enjoying the participation in the church, remembering his boyhood, and feeling at one with everyone in the church.

INT. DAVID'S CAR - 6:30 A.M.

On the drive to the airport, David and John are in the front seat, the two girls in the rear. INTERCUT as the action demands. David's face is a little strained, we see him clearly from time to time illuminated by the headlights of passing cars. Through the windshield, the white line unrolls before him.

DAVID
An early start is an early start, but six-thirty is ridiculous.

JOHN
I told you we could get a cab. I just called to say good-bye.

DAVID
I don't give a damn about the driving.
(after a beat)
He's going to be disappointed when he wakes up and finds that you've already left. I still don't know why you didn't wake him up and have him take you to the airport.

JOHN
I wanted to ask him. I even went into his room. He was sleeping so soundly. Snoring a little. He looked tired. You ought to get him to stop working so hard.

DAVID
I can't make him do anything.

ANDREY
It'll take us three hours to get from the airport if we don't beat that traffic. You don't know what the traffic's like at the end of these vacations.

David's car pulls up in front of the airport line.

AUDREY
There it is - TWA. Well, thank you very much for dropping us off. We had better hurry if we're going to make it.

JOHN (to Audrey)
Why don't you get in line and make sure everything is okay with the reservations while I take care of the luggage.

John starts to take a valise from the back seat.

DAVID
You know how he's going to feel, don't you, John?

Pause

JOHN
(quietly)
I know.

DAVID
Call him before you get on the plane.

JOHN
I will.

CLOSE UP - DAVID

looks at John.

CLOSE UP - JOHN
reacting to David's look.

JOHN
(shouts)
Stop looking at me that way. You don't know what the traffic is like in Baltimore at the end of these vacations. We couldn't sleep.
(more)

CONTINUED

JOHN (cont'd)
You heard Audrey. We're trying to beat some traffic so I don't have to spend all afternoon on the freeway instead of on my exams. They aren't easy, you know.

DAVID
I know. You don't have to shout at me. I know where it's at. I wish he did.

JOHN
(with emotion)
I can't live my life for him.

DAVID
You think that's what he wants?

JOHN
I know he loves me. I know he's trying to help me but he smothers me.

CLOSE UP - DAVID

looks at John.

JOHN
You're a great son. I wish I could be everything he wants me to be, but I can't. I just can't. I'm not what he thinks I am. I have to go my own way.

DAVID
(quietly)
Okay.

John punches David briefly on the shoulder. In his gesture we see how fond John is of David.

JOHN
Good-bye, Dave, take care of yourself. Good-bye, Joyce.

John takes his valise, goes quickly.

JOYCE
What's he always running away from? I've never seen a father that loves a son as much as your father loves him.

DAVID
John can't take the responsibility.

CONTINUED

JOYCE
You take all the responsibility for all of them. Why do you continue to take it? He cuts you down every time he has a chance. He's competitive. He castrates you.

David starts the car thoughtfully.

DAVID
That fifty-six year old man that thinks he's twenty-five. He's the only one that keeps us together. Without him, we're just boarders in the house each going our own separate ways.
(laughs at his father and himself)
He doesn't know there isn't such a thing as a family any more.

INT. - SKAG'S HOUSE, MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Skag is seated at a writing desk. He is compiling a set of figures; for this he needs to put on his reading glasses. Through the open bathroom door we see Jo. She is preparing to go out. Under a filmy, very feminine peignoir we can see the provocative outline of a garter belt through the almost transparent negligee. This intimate glimpse of Jo reinforces our feeling that she is a highly desirable love partner. Skag looks over and feels a flush of desire. While most married couples' desire fails after six months, theirs has gone on for twenty-seven years. He puts down the papers in front of him. Jo walks in, unaware that Skag is feeling the way about her he does.

JO
How's it coming?

SKAG
(abstractly)
How's what coming?

JO
The figures. You said you were trying to see if you could balance the time payments and your paycheck. Well?

SKAG
(rakishly)
All of a sudden those figures don't seem as interesting as the one I'm looking at.

Jo turns, posing cutely provocative.

JO
Come on, after twenty-seven years? You better put on your glasses.

He turns away in mock anger. He never wants to admit that he needs glasses.

SKAG
What do you mean? I don't need glasses. I just wear these for...

JO
(laughing)
For seeing?

Skag laughs with her.

SKAG
I was pretty rough on John and that girl, what's-her-name...

JO
Audrey Prescott.
(with emphasis)
Yes, you were - very rough.

SKAG
You think they were sore at me? You think that's why he left so early?

He snaps the pencil in two between his fingers and crosses to the dressing room.

JO
I don't know.
(pauses)
I don't like it. Sneaking away at six in the morning.

Jo continues to dress. She approaches him, concerned.

SKAG
You heard him on the phone. He didn't sneak away. He just decided to go so he could prepare for exams and he didn't want to wake me.

JO
You believe that do you?

SKAG
What's happening, Jo? Are we out of step? My God, the whole world has changed these past ten years.
(with bitter humor)
Would you ever have thought they would have naked people doing these

SKAG (cont'd)
things in movies and that people would come to see them, including women? But it's not only that, Jo. A person's word doesn't mean anything any more. People divorce each other at the drop of a hat. Did those things we were brought up to believe in never mean anything? Were they lies all the time?

Jo stands thoughtfully a moment.

JO
I don't know. Maybe they were.

SKAG
I have to talk to Barbara. Where are they tonight?

JO
Stop worrying about their being virgins. Chances are they aren't.

SKAG
They're fifteen and eighteen!

JO
Chances are they aren't.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

searches within himself, realizes that what Jo is saying is probably true.

SKAG
Maybe you're right. The world's going to a different place.
(shrugs)
Maybe it'll be better.

JO
It'll be different, that's for sure.

SKAG
It seems that it all happened so quickly.

Skag suddenly puts a hand over his face as though he had a premonition that he cannot control.

JO
What's the matter? What are you so terribly depressed for? It isn't like you. Is it the cold?

SKAG
(with wonder)
I dreamed all last night. The things I dreamed!

JO
Your nose still running?

SKAG
No, I think I've licked the cold.

JO
Maybe I shouldn't go out.

SKAG
No. Go to the club. You know you always enjoy it. I want to watch the East-West game. I've been waiting for it all week. Are you going?

JO
I'm going.

SKAG
Don't come back too late. Or the next time you shouldn't parade around in your underwear.

JO
(looks at him, smiles)
I may even be back early.

SKAG
(putting his arm around her)
Most people lose it in six months. We haven't lost it in twenty-seven years.

JO
They ought to make one of those movies about us.

SKAG
It would be too much for them.

JO
See you later.

Jo goes. Skag goes to the television set and switches it on. The East-West Shriner's football game is showing on TV. We hear the pontification of Cosell and the side remarks of Don Meredith. Skag takes his drink, kicks off his shoes and sits in a leather recliner watching the game. Skag hears a stirring in his father's room. He crosses to open the door.

INT. - PETAR'S BEDROOM

Skag looks in on old Petar who is sleeping and snoring softly. His false teeth are in a glass beside the bed.

INT. - MASTER BEDROOM

Skag comes back in. We see him take a brief gulp of his drink.

TV ANNOUNCER'S VOICE
...And that's the way it goes. After completely dominating the first half, the West just seemed to fold. I tell you, folks, this is a game; this is the game of the year. John Stennis has just broken it wide open for the East...

SKAG
(ragging the TV players)
Ah, c'mon, what the hell do you know! The kid's a scrambler!
(as West defends against conversion)
All right, now watch that nose guard! De-fense! De-fense! De-fense!
(as the play is successful)
Ah, hell!
(gulping drink)
Okay, we can still pull it out...
(after the kick off)
Did you see that? An illegal man downfield and you penalize West for clipping?
(half rising)
C'mon you robber; you blind or something? You got money on the game?

The sounds of the cheers are rising for the climax of the play but Skag is suddenly silent. The voice of the announcer soars as he describes a particularly exciting play. As the play goes on, we are struck by the fact that Skag is no longer speaking back to the TV.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

eyes open. Staring. There is almost a feeling of foreboding, a momentary disorientation that he can't quite understand.

AGAIN SKAG'S POV - ROOM

The entire side of the room shifts out of focus and the sounds of the play by play become blurred as if it is a recording out of sync.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

A mist of perspiration gathers on his face. He shakes hishead, trying to clear it. Then he blinks and exercises his lower jaw from side to side.

CONTINUED

SKAG
Hey, what's going on?

He takes a quick gulp of his drink, waiting to see whether it will help.

AGAIN HIS POV

The TV image has cleared, the sound is normal.

Skag walks to the bathroom a little shakily.

INT. BATHROOM

Skag crosses to the mirror and looks into it.

CLOSE UP - SKAG'S REFLECTION

Nothing seems wrong.

He goes from the mirror and walks back into the bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM

He goes back to the recliner, this time standing, holding onto the arm.

SKAG
(small apprehensive laugh)
What the hell...Am I coming apart or something?

He grins a little apologetically, almost as if he is ashamed of any transient weakness. OS the sounds of the game grow more frenzied as the Announcer is describing a particularly exciting play; a ninety-seven yard return of a punt.

CLOSE UP - SKAG'S FACE

Now he no longer seems in control of his muscles. His eyes are glazed and unseeing, his mouth a little slack, his expression fixed -- almost comic idiotic.

CLOSE UP - SKAG'S EYES

We arehearing what Skag is hearing: the siren of a passing fire engine OS becomes an irritating insistent ringing sound, a monotonous high-pitched bell punctuated by the bass drum beats of his own pounding heart. The drum goes faster and faster, like a motor without a governor; the ringing begins to ascend the scale into decibels almost beyond tolerance. Something has to break, something has to give. And it does: the internal experience

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

peaks into a tearing, ringing jumble of chaotic sounds that are no longer coherent, just pure pain. We hear choked, gasping noises as if an animal is being smothered.

CLOSE UP - SKAG'S FACE

startled at the sounds coming from his own mouth.

MEDIUM SHOT - SKAG

Then Skag gets himself together. The violence of the attack has passed, leaving him apprehensive and a little shaken. Skag makes a decision and walks unsteadily toward the door and crosses to stand in front of his father's room. After a beat, he changes his mind...it would do no good to wake the old man. He walks unsteadily, knocking over chairs, etc., anything in his path. Skag tries to pick up and dial the telephone, but it slips out of his hand, the cord tangling at his feet. Skag begins to walk out of the room. Slowly, almost bizarrely, he goes to the television set and turns it off.

CAMERA follows Skag down the stairs. He slowly, with effort, makes his way to the door. Opens it.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Skag makes his way to the car, searches his pocket, realizinghe has forgotten the car keys, and makeshis way back into the house.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Skag makes his way to the desk, picks up car keys, and goes out again.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Skag starts toward car, gets in.

INT. CAR - DAY

Skag starts car.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

trying to follow white line. From behind, we hear the sounds of horns blowing.

EXT. EXPRESSWAY - DAY

Skag pulls car into slow lane.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Dr. Moscone is a man in his forties, a little abrupt but with an intuition about his patients. Skag enters as though reluctant. He is now feeling better and he has that second generation immigrant's guilt about being sick. It's almost as though he feels that it's a weakness to be ill.

SKAG
Hello, doctor.

DR. MOSCONE
(looking at him)
Hello.

SKAG
I'm sorry to bother you, but I thought something was wrong with me, but I feel all right now.

Skag starts to go.

DR. MOSCONE
Just a minute. The nurse says that you passed out.

SKAG
Just for a minute.

DR. MOSCONE
What happened?

SKAG
Well, I didn't sleep too well last night. I had a cold. You know what I mean, and my nose started to run alot.

DR. MOSCONE
Your nose started to run?

SKAG
Yeah, and I had alot of dreams.

DR. MOSCONE
What kind of dreams?

SKAG
Bad dreams. But I'm fifty-six and I've never had a sick day in my life.

CONTINUED

SKAG
I'm going. I'm going Doctor. The game's on.

He reaches out to shake hands with Dr. Moscone. Dr. Moscone takes his hand and holds it for a moment. Skag looks down at Dr. Moscone's hand, holding onto his own.

SKAG
What are you doing?

DR. MOSCONE
Squeeze.

SKAG
What do you mean?

DR. MOSCONE
Squeeze it hard.

Skag makes an effort. He looks at Dr. Moscone, puzzled because it's obvious that he cannot squeeze his hand.

CLOSE UP - DR. MOSCONE

studying Skag.

DR. MOSCONE
Now the other one.

Pause.

DR. MOSCONE
I think we'll have to keep you here for a while.

SKAG
What for?

DR. MOSCONE
Mr. Skagzka, when you took my hand before, it must have been apparent to you that one hand was stronger than the other one.

SKAG
No, it's not apparent at all.

DR. MOSCONE
Give me your hand.

SKAG
We've done this before.

CONTINUED

DR. MOSCONE
Give it to me.

As he does, Dr. Moscone has aplmed something quickly into his hand before Skag can see what it is.

DR. MOSCONE
What's inside my hand?

SKAG
What do you mean, what's inside your hand?

DR. MOSCONE
Is it a quarter? Is it a box of marches?

SKAG
A quarter.

Dr. Moscone now releases Skag's hand and shows him what was inside. It's a match box.

DR. MOSCONE
Nurse, we're going to admit Mr. Skagzka.

SKAG
What for?

DR. MOSCONE
Tell them to order phenobarbital, one grain, QCH around the clock.

SKAG
What's going on here?

DR. MOSCONE
Have them set up EKG and EEG and have vital signs every two hours.

Skag starts to rise.

SKAG
I'm going home.

Skag gets up, walks to door, tries to open it. Somehow he cannot turn the knob. Skag looks at his arm puzzled, starts to laugh apologetically.

SKAG
What the hell is this? My hand's fallen asleep.

Tries to turn knob again.

CONTINUED

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SKAG
What the hell is this? My hand's fallen asleep.

Tries to turn knob again.

CONTINUED

SKAG
Now I can't move my arm.

DR. MOSCONE
Mr. Skagzka, you've had a stroke this afternoon, and I think you're going to have another one.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

SKAG
Listen, doctor, there's...

Literally in the middle of a sentence, his speech begins to slur. One side of his mouth begins to drop. The bottom lid of one eye sags.

SKAG
...nothing...wrong...with me.

DR. MOSCONE
(seeing what is happening)
Nurse!

SKAG
Whoosh...mat...ter...You... guys...are...

DR. MOSCONE
Easy, Mr. Skagzka, easy.

SKAG
Doc...tor, what's hap...pen... ing...to...me...

Dr. Moscone catches Skag as he falls forward into his arms.

INT. INTENSIVE CARE UNIT

As Skag slowly regains consciousness, CAMERA AS HIS EYES SEE a hazy reality, like looking at the world through a frosted shield, suspended above. A blinding sword of light quickly coalesces into a sparkling ceiling fixture. As from a great distance, we hear the muted SOUNDS OF THE HOSPITAL: the soft VOICE of a nurse speaking to an orderly, the TINKLE of a pipette of glass, an insistent BELL from a corridor outside.

CAMERA MOVES to explore the narrow boundaries of Skag's vision. His bed is shielded on two sides by hospital screens. Through the mounds made in the covers by his feet, he can see the chart hanging at the foot of his bed.

ANGLE TO SHOW SKAG, right arm sttached to intravenous drip tube. His disorientation and claustrophobia are evident. His eyes move from side to side, seeking some familiar point of reference. There is none. Surrendering to panic, he tries to open his mouth to call out. But he only succeeds in grotesquely twisting his face -- one side is obviously paralyzed. He attempts to move; and he experiences the terror of not being in control of the entire left side of his body. With his good arm, he reaches over and feels the paralyzed side, from cheek down as far as he can reach. The lack of sensation and the terror of that fact is reflected in his distended right eye. Again Skag tries to open his mouth to call out. The attempt ends in a garbled throat sound. He is unable to control the saliva dripping out of the paralyzed side of his mouth. We see him reach out with his tongue, trying to lick his lips. With his good hand he crumples the sheet to wipe his spittle. For a moment after this he seems to surrender to a type of despair, rocking his head from side to side, MOANING like an animal, disgusted with himself. His MOANS become a grotesque and garbled "No,..No...No..."

The final step of his attempt to master the situation is anger, almost frenetic, childish anger. A tantrum such as would be thrown by a tortured child: he uses his good hand to grab everything in sight, twisting the bed covers, throwing the pillows on the floor. His hand finally grips the intravenous tube going into his arm and then sanity and despair set in. He does not pull the tube; he slowly raises his good hand and begins to pound it down at his side. Again, harder, then less hard and then finally, the anger and the pounding subside. Out of his liquid eyes flow a few silent tears. This is even more terrible a sight than before, for now his face is set.

Dr. Moscone now stands before him.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

The expression on his face can be described best in one word: appalled. Appalled that this can happen to a person, appalled that this has happened to him. This expression of being appalled continues throughout the scene.

DR. MOSCONE
Do you know who you are?

CONTINUED

CLOSE UP - SKAG

looking at Dr. Moscone appalled.

DR. MOSCONE
Do you know who you are?

CLOSE UP - SKAG

Still looking at Dr. Moscone appalled as though something deep within him has been shattered and deeply violated and that he refuses to come to terms with anything else.

Dr. Moscone calmly puts a finger to the Pterigoid bone area of Skag's head beneath his ear. It causes a sharp pain in Skag. Moscone is not trying to be cruel. Neither is he trying to be considerate of Skag. He doesn't have the time. He is merely trying to discover for himself the nature of Skag's condition.

DR. MOSCONE
Do you know what happened to you?

CLOSE UP - SKAG

looks at Dr. Moscone appalled.

DR. MOSCONE
Do you know how long you've been here?

CLOSE UP - SKAG

shakes his head in negative.

DR. MOSCONE
You've been here a day and a half. You have had a stroke. A stroke is a swelling around the spinal cord and the brain. It will lessen in a few days.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

looking at Dr. Moscone appalled.

DR. MOSCONE
(persisting)
You work in the steel yards, don't you.

There is a moment. Skag simply stares at Dr. Moscone appalled.

CONTINUED

DR. MOSCONE
Are you married?

CLOSE UP - SKAG

still staring at Dr. Moscone without giving any sign.

DR. MOSCONE
You're married, aren't you, Mr. Skagzka.

There is a moment. No response.

DR. MOSCONE
How many children do you have?

There is a moment.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

He puts up four fingers.

DR. MOSCONE
(relieved)
That's right, Mr. Skagzka. Your family is waiting to see you but they won't be able to see you until tomorrow. I talked to your family. I understand you're a very strong man, Mr. Skagzka. That's good becuase you're in for a fight, Mr. Skagzka. You're in for the fight of your life.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

After a moment, trying to say something.

DR. MOSCONE
Are you trying to tell me something, Mr. Skagzka?

Pause.

CLOSE UP - SKAG'S FACE

trying to form a word.

DR. MOSCONE
What is it?

CLOSE UP - SKAG'S FACE

We can see the word forming.

SKAG
Why?

INT. WARD - DAY

Skag wakes up to find himself in the ward.

CAMERA follows as his eyes about the room, from the left to right. There are men in various stages of stroke.

NURSE WATKINS
Your wife is here. Shall I tell her to come in?

CLOSE UP - SKAG

stares at Nurse Watkins as though he doesn't comprehend her.

NURSE WATKINS
You should see her before you take this.

Skag looks at the man in the next bed.

SKAG'S POV, MAN IN NEXT BED

His face is twisted and he is convulsed.

Skag finally tries to speak urgently.

CLARENCE
He wants a mirror.
(gently)
You don't want a mirror.

Skag tries to speak but can't get the words out. Skag finally takes a mirror from the bedside table with his good hand. Skag looks at it and is startled at the reflection that comes back to him. Skag looks at container in nurse's hand, not wanting to reveal his emotions.

SKAG
Wh...what's in this?

NURSE WATKINS
Something to make you sleep.
(unable to resist his gaze)
...Mostly Demerol.

SKAG
I'll t...take it...
n...now.

NURSE WATKINS
Your wife?

SKAG

Not...n...ow.
(as nurse doesnot move, forcefully)
I d...don't wa..nt to see h...her.

INT. HALL CORRIDOR -

Jo, David, Patricia and Barbara stand in the corridor. They hear Skag's voice loudly o.s.

SKAG O.S.
I d...don't wa...nt to see h...her!

Jo goes into Skag's room.

JO
You don't want to see me, Pete?

The nurse and Clarence silently exit the area.

CLOSE ON SKAG AND JO

There are tears on her cheeks, although her face is calm and her lips slightly smiling. There is a long moment, a pause in which we see and feel the strong bond between them. (It must not be expressed in facial expressions or gestures - it must be projected by the two of them from something inside, something so real, so strong, that we begin to see it is an almost palpable bond making them one thing, one mind, one love.)

There are many long pauses throughout the scene.

ANOTHER ANGLE

as she sits on the bed, holding his hands. We see his hands at first grasped, then grasping.

JO
After all these years? Who do you think you're kidding?

SKAG
I wan...ted to s...see you, Jo...
(twisted attempt at smile)
I did..dn't want you to...s...ee me.
(bitterly, turning face away)
N...not like...this.

She gently takes his head in her hands and turns his face to hers. She kises him tenderly; then smiling:

JO
That ought to prove something.

SKAG
(even in trauma, his humor)
Th...at pr...ves th...at you're a n...nut. You l...ike ug...ly peo...ple.

JO
(pathetic attempt at humor, brightly)
You think that, do you. You should see yourself sometimes after a night out with the boys in Noonan's Bar.
(looking intently, lovingly into his face)

Silent tears flow from Skgg's eyes.

SKAG
(reaching across to touch his paralyzed left side)
You hav...n't asked m...me anything a...bout th...this.

JO
I know. I've been talking to the doctor.

SKAG
But sup...posing I s...stay... para...lyzed?

CLOSE UP - JO

She can't answer.

CONTINUED

SKAG
(slapping his paralyzed side as if to awaken it)
What d...did I do to de...serve this? Why should it h...have hap...pened to me? I have nev..er been s...sick. You know t...that, Jo.

JO
I know, Pete.

Skag gathers himself together with physical effort. Tries twisted smile.

SKAG
(brightly)
The k...kids?

JO
(picks up phone)
Will you get me 555-1356 in Baltimore and ask for John Skagzka.
(to Skag)
I knew you'd want to talk to him.

SKAG
Isn't he here?

JO
Not yet. But David and Patricia and Barbara are.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

tries to hid his disappointment.

JO
(quickly)
It's alright...He's been in touch with Dr. Moscone. He wants to talk to you personally on the phone.

CLOSE ANGLE PAST JO TO SKAG

He picks up the phone. We see by his face what this means to him.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

SKAG
(into phone)
Hel...lo, Son?

JOHN'S VOICE
(through phone)
Hello there, Dad.

SKAG
You al...all r...right?

JOHN'S VOICE
(little laugh)
Sure, you're the one we've been worried about.

SKAG
I'd li...ke to s...see you, Jo...John.

JOHN'S VOICE
Dad, I talked to the doctor. Everything's going to be fine. They have everything under control. I'm on top of the situation.

SKAG
I ne...ed to h...hear fr...om you th...at I'm g...oing to be al...right. Y...you und...er... stand?

JOHN'S VOICE
You've had a stroke, Dad. Moscone doesn't believe it's critical, just a stroke...a common garden variety type stroke. The clot seems to have lodged in the upper right cortex, but he doesn't believe that any dominant center is involved. He'll call me if the condition worsens.

SKAG
B...but do...n't you th...ink you ou...ght to be h...here, Jo...hn?

JOHN'S VOICE
Dad, there's just no reason to. Moscone is a good man -- there are a lot of good doctors at Mercy -- I understand the Resident wrote the book on strokes.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

We see Skag's deep disappointment; he is crushed.

SKAG
I und...der...stand, John.

JOHN'S VOICE
(hedging, but relieved)
If I thought I could do any good, I'd be there.
(a trace of a whine)
But I'm up to my neck in exams.
(after a long silence from Skag)
I know you'd be angry if I flunked out. You're going to make it, Dad. Just remember, strokes have become commonplace. They're dealing with them every day.
(a long pause)
Dad?

SKAG
S...sure, John, you t...take care of your ex...ams.

JOHN'S VOICE
I want you to be proud of me.

As Skag replies, we see the hurt in his eyes.

SKAG
Sure, John, I'm p...proud of you. Good...bye, John.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

Seems to be ten years older before our eyes.

CLOSE UP - JO

looking at Skag, realizing whatis happening to him.

SKAG
I think I ought to go to sleep now.
(gestures toward pill)

Jo takes pill and glass and helpshim to take it. He lies in bed, not looking at her; she is watching him. Suddenly, he turns his head as the tears come. Jo turns her head. They cannot look at each other.

HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

David opens up door of room.

CONTINUED

DAVID
What's happening? How is he?

Jo tries to smile at David and the girls. She opens her mouth to say something encouraging, but is unable to get it out. Finally she blurts:

JO
I don't know, I just don't know. He's such a strong man; feels everything... so deeply.

PATRICIA
Can we see him?

JO
He's asleep.

BARBARA
Could we just look in?

JO
All right, if you're quiet, I guess.

DAVID
I'll look in and then I'm going to see the doctor and make sure they're doing everything. I don't trust any of them.

They start. There is a moment.

CLOSE UP - JO

her face turns from panic to determination. She walks to the phone at the nurses' station.

JO
(to nurse)
Can I use your phone, please?

NURSE WATKINS
Certainly.

JO
What do I do, charge it to the room?

NURSE WATKINS
Yes.
(to Nurse Matthews)
Three phenobarbitals for Mr. Berenson.

JO
Operator, I want to call Baltimore, Maryland. The number is area code 301, 555-1356. Charge it to Room 485.

NURSE WATKINS
(to Nurse Matthews)
This label isn't clear. It's Valium for 318. The man with the broken hip.

JOHN'S VOICE
(through phone)
Hello.

JO
John...

JOHN'S VOICE
Hello, Ma...I just spoke to Dad.

JO
I know you did. John, I want you to come out here right away.

JOHN'S VOICE
Ma, I already explained to Dad -- the exams...

JO
(breaking in)
I don't give a damn about the exams. He wasn't asking you to come, he was begging you to come!
(voice breaking)
He's proud... Your father's a strong man. I've never seen him beg before.
(crying)
It was almost too much to bear.

JOHN'S VOICE
It won't help anything for me to mess up here. I know you're going through alot, but for God's sake, try to see my side of it. Ma, you're making me out to be some kind of son of a bitch.

CONTINUED

CLOSE UP - JO

JO
Not just a son of a bitch, John... you're a cold son of a bitch. Don't come. Don't come ever!

She slams down the phone, contains herself.

Jo walks back towards Skag's room.

INT. DR. MOSCONE'S OFFICE - MERCY HOSPITAL

DAVID
What's going to happen to my father?

DR. MOSCONE
Nobody knows yet.

DAVID
You're a doctor, you're supposed to know.

DR. MOSCONE
I'm sorry. It'll have to be good enough.

DAVID
My dad makes a living with his muscles, with his back. If he can't do it, he'll die! Now I have to know how he is.

DR. MOSCONE
He's had a massive stroke. You're lucky he's not dead.

Pause.

DAVID
You mean he'll be a vegetable?

DR. MOSCONE
I don't mean anything of the kind. I'm trying to put things in perspective.

Pause.

CONTINUED

DAVID
All right. I'm sorry. He's my father.

DR. MOSCONE
I know that.
(pauses)
Do you want to talk about strokes?'

CLOSE UP - DAVID

listening intently.

DR. MOSCONE
Most of us have them. You know when we perform autopsies, we find that forty percent of the people have had strokes. It's just the degree of them.

Pause.

DAVID
What's my father's degree?

DR. MOSCONE
We'll find out tomorrow. We're giving him a brain scan.

DAVID
He's the toughest man I've ever known. If it takes guts and will, he'll make it. That man loves life!

DR. MOSCONE
We'll know tomorrow.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Skag is wheeled into a room in which there is a gigantic cyclotron.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

Skag is a man of great courage and there are not many times in his lifehhe is afraid, but now he feels helpless in the midst of this gigantic machinery. It's powerful proof that his own future is not in his own hands.

CONTINUED

TECHNICIAN #1
Mr. Skagzka. We're going to inject radioactive dye into your vein. It's going to burn a little and you're going to feel hot, but in two minutes it's going to light up your whole brain.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

startled.

CLOSE UP - JO

frightened.

CLOSE UP - DAVID

angry.

DAVID
He's not up to going through all this now.

TECHNICIAN #1
We have the orders right here.

DAVID
Why can't you carry out the orders tomorrow?

TECHNICIAN #2
All we do is do what we're told.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

looks from one to the other, realizes that his fate is in somebody else's hands, not his own.

DAVID
Where's Moscone?

TECHNICIAN #1
He's in another part of the hospital. He's in a procedure.

David exchanges looks with Jo.

DAVID
I want to talk to him.

NURSE
I'll get him for you.

CONTINUED

JO
Do you think we should make all this fuss, David?

DAVID
Unless you make trouble, anything can happen to you in these places.

Nurse hands David the telephone.

NURSE
It's Dr. Moscone.

DR. MOSCONE'S VOICE
It's not necessary for me to be there. The technicians are particularly competent. They'll give me the findings. Listen, Mr. Skagzka, I'm a good doctor. You're going to have to rely on someone. It might as well be me.

David is about to say something into the telephone, but Dr. Moscone has already hung up. David looks at his father and the gigantic macninery helplessly.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

inside the cyclotron. All that can be seen is his head and eyes. What the machine does now is frightening and impersonal. It moves from one side of his brain to the other, scanning the brain. It goes click, click, click. The two technicians look at the monitor.

TECHNICIAN #1
(quietly)
Call Dr. Moscone right away.

TECHNICIAN #2
Cold uptake in the upper lobe.

CLOSE UP - MONITOR

we now see Skag's brain. There is a dark section in the right upper lobe.

INT. ANOTHER HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Skag now lies on the table with his head tilted and iodine solution all over the side of his neck. Another technician is poised with a long needle. Dr. Moscone stands beside the technician.

DR. MOSCONE
All right, this is going to hurt but there's no way we can help that. You can shout, you can scream, but
(MORE)

DR. MOSCONE (cont'd)
don't move. If you move, Mr. Skagzka, there's a good chance you can wind up paralyzed for the rest of your life.

The needle is injected by the technician.

DR. MOSCONE
All right. Pressure injector.

Dr. Moscone looks over at the monitor. There are blips on the screen. They seem to be screeching erratically.

DR. MOSCONE
Slow down. Hyperactive focus in the temporal region. Slow down, we don't want any tremors.

TECHNICIAN
Yes, sir.

DR. MOSCONE
The delta waves are up. Slow it down.

Dr. Moscone looks at the technician who he does not know.

DR. MOSCONE
Where the hell did you come from?

Dr. Moscone looks at the monitor again.

DR. MOSCONE
All right, that's better.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

he has never felt such pain in his life.

DR. MOSCONE
Hold still. Hold still. Shout out. Scream if you want to.

CLOSE UP - SKAG
despite the tremendous pain he is feeling, he neither shouts out nor screams.

DR. MOSCONE
Mr. Skagzka, you're a fool. This is not an endurance contest. Relax, you don't have to prove anything to me. I'm going to have to leave it in for just another second.

CLOSE UP - SKAG
he still does not scream. Dr. Moscone watches Skag.

DR. MOSCONE
Mr. Skagzka, you're one hell of a hard head.

CONTINUED

INT. HOSPITAL WARD - NIGHT, DARKNESS

We hear the whoomp of a bed rail being lowered. Then a light switches on. We see it's Skag. Skag is throwing back the covers on his bed.

Halluska, the man in the next bed, of about the same age as Skag with rimless glasses and close-cropped white hair, turns to Skag.

HALLUSKA
What's the matter?

SKAG
I have...t...to...go.

He is making his way, he is struggling to raise himself up.

HALLUSKA
Ring for the bedpan. That's the way it's done. Ring for the bedpan.

SKAG
I don't...l...like...the bed...pan.

Skag reaches for a chair, pulls it to side of bed. Other bed lights turn on now.

HALLUSKA
I'm going to ring for the night nurse.

SKAG
You d..do what you want to d...do, but I'm go...ing to the...john.

Tim, a young man in his late twenties, calls out:

TIM
You're going to hurt yourself, man.

SKAG
So w...what, I'm al...ready... h...hurt!

Skag lowers himself to the side.

INTERCUT BETWEEN PATIENTS AND SKAG

Skag next manages to support himself on the bottom bedrail, half-leaning, half-sitting, slides and inches his way along it.

CONTINUED

At the intersection to the next bed, he laboriously pulls another chair forward to use as a bridge to the next bed rail. This process is repeated until the bedrails run out - he has to crawl the remaining distance to the lighted toilet.

The other patients become fascinated by watching his progress. This is, after all, a little closed world of shutins; and this is the most exciting happening ever in their hospital lives. They begin to cheer him on. We hear ad libs: "Go on, Skag, you can make it", "Use the bedrailing, that's right!" A chair comes sliding across the floor, pushed by one of the patients: "Here, Skag, use the chair." etc., etc...

CLOSE MOVING SHOT - SKAG

He has almost fallen several times. Black patches of sweat show on his pajamas, his forehead is beaded. His attention is as intense, his desire as strong as in the opening scene of the steelmill crisis.

SKAG'S P.O.V.

bathroom light getting closer.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

We see the indominatible spirit of the man, the joy of winning in his eyes. For this brief and almost pitiful journey from the bed to the toilet is a supreme achievement.

ANOTHER ANGLE

as Skag almost does not make it on his feet. In fact, he falls forward over the sill of the john and rolls the final distance.

ANGLE FROM THE DARK WARD INTO SKAG

sitting in the blazing light of the tiled john. As he rests on the floor in front of the toilet, he hears the cheers of his peers.

EXT. DR. MOSCONE AT SKAG'S BED - MORNING

DR. MOSCONE
The nurse tells me you made it to the toilet alone last night. You know you could have killed yourself.

SKAG
I d...don't like...them bring...ing the bed...pan.

CONTINUED

DR. MOSCONE
I know you don't like them bringing the bedpan. Can you imagine it if you fell?

Halluska and Tim laugh.

DR. MOSCONE
All right, since you did it, do it again for me. Show me exactly what you did.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

he remembers the journey of last night. It was one of the toughest things of his life. He looks at Dr. Moscone.

CLOSE UP - DR. MOSCONE

looking at him challengingly.

There is a moment.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

accepts the challenge.

Skag arranges the chair, climbs down to it and begins to slide chair across ward.

CLOSE UP - DR. MOSCONE

looking at Skag admiringly.

INT. SKAG'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

David enters carrying a wheel from the plant. Skag is asleep. David whispers to nurse.

DAVID
How is he?

NURSE WATKINS
He's tired. He's done alot today.

David tries to sit down as quietly as he can. Skag opens his eyes.

SKAG
W...when did you...come?

DAVID
Just now.

CONTINUED

Skag looks at wheel in David's hand.

SKAG
What's...that?

DAVID
It's from the mill. The guys wanted you to have it.

SKAG
I c...couldn't even lift it, let alone turn it.

DAVID
You will, Dad. They all think you're doing great, Dad. The therapist. The nurses. Moscone. Phenomenal really.

SKAG
What can I...do...if I can't... w...work any...more? My God, I've...worked...all...my life.

DAVID
Don't worry about it, Dad, you'll be okay.

SKAG
How are things...at the plant?

DAVID
Things are going alright. Everybody misses you.

SKAG
Will they re...place me?

CLOSE UP - DAVID

alarmed.

DAVID
Hell no! What are you talking that way for?!

SKAG
Sure they will. They don't have any senti..ment. When...you can't do any...thing more for them... Finished!

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

DAVID
Don't think about those things, Dad. Let's hear you think about something nice.

SKAG
(with gallows humor)
What's nice...?

DAVID
Remember that time you took off from the mill and went to Atlantic City? We drove all night, we stopped at that doughnut place for coffee. We went into the ocean. You always loved the ocean.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

eyes searching as though looking for something in the room.

DAVID (cont'd)
Remember, Patricia almost got drowned and you dragged her out by her hair? Hey, you remember the Steel Pier... amateur night? Your big triumph.
(laughs)
You won't admit it now, but they never would have gotten you up on that stage if you hadn't been loaded! What was the name of that band? Sonny Potts and his Rhythm Boys?

CLOSE UP - DAVID

laughing.

DAVID (cont'd)
You wanted to sing the Toreador Song from Carmen, but they played "How High the Moon". But you were great, anyway, Dad. I mean it, you were really great! And when the M.C. held his hand over your head, you got all the applause and won the cup! It was the greatest moment of your life!

CLOSE UP - SKAG

his face now in panic.

SKAG
I can't remember.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

CLOSE UP - DAVID

feeling that he has lost something precious of his father.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

David stands with Dr. Moscone

DR. MOSCONE
There are things he'll never remember. That's something this damn thing does. It blows out sacred memories.

INT. WHIRLPOOL - DAY

Skag has a towel on in the whirlpool. The physical therepist is working with him. The physical thereapist, an attractive young woman of about 26, Miss Fisher, is supervising Skag's movements.

MISS FISHER
Your pulse is up to one hundred, Mr. Skagzka. We'll have to stop now.

SKAG
What for...feels good.
(pauses)
How could it be so dif...ficult to move your t...toe?

MISS FISHER
The main motor tracks from your head to your toes have been impaired.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

frightened.

SKAG
I've got a living to m...make. I'm a foreman. H...how the hell can I pour steel if I can't even m...move my toe?

MISS FISHER
Mr. Skagzka, we're going to have to stop this now.

She pushes button and whirplool stops churning.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

distrubed.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

INT. PHYSICAL THERAPIST GYM - DAY

Skag is lying down with ten pound weights in each hand, slowly lifting them up and putting them down. His face shows the strain and he is sweating profusely. Jerry, a therapist in his late forties, watches.

JERRY
Slow down. Take it easy. Five minutes is enough. You don't have to do fifteen. You can lose all the progress you've made.

SKAG
J...just five more. No problem; no problem!

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Skag works with the therapist, moving his legs.

THERAPIST
Easy, Mr. Skagzka, easy.

SKAG
I thought the idea was to do it quick...ly.

THERAPIST
No, the idea is to understand how your muscles move to learn to walk again, just like a little baby.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

not accepting it at all.

SKAG
(gruffly)
All r...right. Now...I'm a baby...

As they walk, they pass a room where a man in a bed is completely rotated, again and again.

SKAG
What are they do...ing with him?

THERAPIST
Rotating him.

SKAG
How long has he been h...here?

CONTINUED

THERAPIST
Eleven years.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

walks all the more deliberately, determined and panicked that the next eleven years of his life won't be spent here,

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

David and Dr. Moscone talk. As they talk, we see in the background Skag making his way toward them in the walker with the therapist. Skag is now approaching them.

DAVID
I told you he'd do well.

DR. MOSCONE
(thoughtfully)
Yes, he's doing well. Almost too well.

Pause.

DAVID
What do you mean?

DR. MOSCONE
Your father has a will to go on that staggers the imagination, but I almost wisn his recovery might be a little slower.

DAVID
Why?

DR. MOSCONE
Your father has been traumatized to the depths of what we used to call the soul. He's been made to realize how fragile he is. That to a man with your father's determination and self-sufficiency must be an enormous thing.

DAVID
What's it going to do to him?

DR. MOSCONE
I don't know. I know you want me to tell you you're going to have your father back the way

(MORE)

CONTINUED

DR. MOSCONE (cont'd)
he was. It's something most sons want, but you're not going to have it. They don't come back the same way, never. There's a change.

Skag has now nearly reached them.

CLOSE UP - DAVID

watching his father wonderingly.

INT. WARD - NIGHT

Skag looks over at Halluska who is staring at the ceiling.

SKAG
When did you get yours?

HALLUSKA
Two years ago.

SKAG
Two y...years ago...and you're still here!?

HALLUSKA
This is my second stroke.

SKAG
You look pret...ty good.

HALLUSKA
(without enthusiasm)
I'm alright.

SKAG
What do you do?

HALLUSKA
I'm a watchmaker.

SKAG
Where do you wo...work?

HALLUSKA
Goodman's Jewelry Store.

SKAG
That the one on Brad...dock Avenue?

HALLUSKA
Yeah.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

SKAG
Good profession, watch...making. I always wondered how you could do it, working with such l...little things.
(pauses)
How did it happen? The first time.

HALLUSKA
I felt it in the morning. Just kind of a little numbness in the nerves in this eye and I didn't think much of it. Then later in the day it got a bit worse. And then in the afternoon, they had a fire up in the hills and I sat on the grass watching it. And all of a sudden I couldn't get off the grass.

SKAG
How did your fami...ly take it?

HALLUSKA
They cried a lot. But then something funny happened. I guess it's only natural it happened.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

SKAG
What do you mean?

HALLUSKA
I wasn't the breadwinner anymore and they didn't quite know what to do with me.

SKAG
You sure you're not imagining it?

HALLUSKA
No.
(tears in his eyes)
My wife won't let me finish a sentence. She always finishes it for me, trying to guess what I'm going to say. She's impatient with me.
(bitter humor)
She always guesses wrong. She never knows what I want to say to finish the sentence. And my mother-in-law told me I was lazy.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

SKAG
But you're o...kay now. Y...you licked it.

HALLUSKA
Yeah, I licked it, and I wake up in the morning and I say every day, dammit, here I am, still alive.

SKAG
You mean you feel good about it?

HALLUSKA
No, I want to die.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

startled.

SKAG
Why? You came through.

HALLUSKA
Because you can never forget this. You never forget how cruel life can be to you. You never can forget how one day you're a good man, making a living, taking care of everybody and then you're helpless and no one really cares.

Halluska breaks down into tears. Skag looks the other way, not wanting to look at Halluska.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Skag is walking with Nurse Watkins in the walker. He's still upset over the conversation with Halluska.

NURSE WATKINS
Let's not make a foot race out of this. That's what we did yesterday and look what happened.

SKAG
You said it's like a ba...by. A baby falls down a lot doesn't it?

NURSE WATKINS
Stop pushing yourself, Mr. Skagzka.

He moves down the corridor in the walker four or five paces.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

NURSE PRYOR
(approaches Nurse Watkins)
Whose bed do I hang the IV for in Room 343?

NURSE WATKINS
Wait a minute, let me see.
(goes to room, looks in room, walks over to her)
The patient in the second bed.

Nurse Watkins turns, sees a startling sight.

NURSE WATKINS' P.O.V.

Skag pushes aside the walker and begins to walk by himself.

NURSE WATKINS
Mr. Skagzka! Mr. Skagzka, you can't do that.

She runs over to Skag. Skag staggers.

SKAG
Leave me a...lone!

Nurse Watkins still stands near Skag.

SKAG
Get the hell out of here!

We see him take four or five more staggering steps. Clarence the orderly, runs toward Skag as Skag collapses in his arms.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

breathless with impatience and angry at himself.

INT. SKAG'S WARD - NIGHT

Barbara sits next to Skag in a chair. He is in that state of half asleep-half awake that patients who are under medication fall into. The awkwardness of the relationship between Skag and Barbara is apparent here. Skag feels a revulsion that it is difficult for him to hide towards Barbara. It's not only that she is obese, but that he feels something unsavory about her. He cannot define it and it disturbs him. In this whole scene, we feel that Skag is playing the father, not really being himself. It's almost as though he is a parody of what he once was.

CONTINUED

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SKAG
You've been here since six o'clock.

BARBARA
I'll stay until lights out.

Skag looks at Barbara as though trying to grasp something solid from the past.

SKAG
Your grades aren't good, are they?

BARBARA
No, Dad.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

remembering something, feeling a triumph that he does remember it.

SKAG
You got a "D" in algebra.

BARBARA
I'm not good in algebra, Dad. It's all a mystery to me. A dark, unpleasant mystery.

SKAG
You didn't do any better in English ei...either and you act like you know something about English.

BARBARA
The teachers don't know what they're talking about. They're all so stupid and I disagree with them.

SKAG
(a parody of himself)
They're stupid but you're n...not stupid.

BARBARA
But they are, Dad. I don't care if they are teachers. They're prejudiced and they're opinionated and they're small.

SKAG
(parodying himself)
Don't question your teachers. Who...who are you to question your teachers?

CONTINUED

BARBARA
I get so much more out of working with the retarded kids downtown.

SKAG
But that won't help you in your fu...future.

BARBARA
Does one always have to do something to help oneself, Dad?

CLOSE UP - SKAG

BARBARA (cont'd)
You ought to see some of them, Dad. It's really interesting. I always thought that the brain was all of a human being. But it isn't. Some of them have more compassion than anybody.' More than any of us. It's like watching us without all the layers our phony culture has given us.

SKAG
Where do you get off being a phil...osopher? You haven't proven yourself enough to be a philosopher.

Pause.

BARBARA
You don't like me very much do you, Dad?

Pause.

SKAG
Of course I like you. Wh...what are you talking about?

BARBARA
I know I'm fat. I know you're a little ashamed of me.

SKAG
I'm not ashamed of y...you. What are you talking about?

BARBARA
I guess I'll go.

CONTINUED

SKAG
Yes. Y...you go. Why doesn't Patricia come? She's afraid isn't she? She doesn't like to l...look at me.

BARBARA
No.
(pause)
Patricia's a wonderful girl.

SKAG
She's a wonderful girl, but w...what I'm saying is true, isn't it?

Barbara doesn't answer. She reaches over and kisses him.

BARBARA
I love you, Dad.

Skag recoils a little

BARBARA
Goodnight.

SKAG
Goodnight. Be a good girl.

She goes. Skag tries to sleep. Over his face we hear strange and inarticulate sounds. Skag turns.

SKAG'S POV

Halluska writhing in his sleep.

SKAG
Halluska...?

The sounds continue.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

alarmed.

SKAG
Halluska...

CLOSE UP - HALLUSKA

his face is livid red. Skag withdraws in alarm and rings the bell at his bedside. He continues to ring it furiously.

CONTINUED

Skag now lowers the bedrail and makes it torturously to the door of the ward.

SKAG'S P.O.V.

SKAG
Nurse! Nurse!

There is no answer. He looks about.

SKAG'S P.O.V.

An Intern is walking leisurely down the hall.

SKAG
Hey you!

Intern turns, puzzled.

SKAG
Come here! You! Come here!
Get in here!

Intern walks into room and looks at Halluska. Nurse Watkins now enters.

INTERN
Get a trach tube! Call anesthesiology!
(to Nurse Matthews)
Adrenaline stat! Draw blood gasses!

CLOSE UP - SKAG

frightened.

Intern pulls curtain, but not all the way.

SKAG'S P.O.V.

There is a gap through which Skag can see some of the happenings and it is, therefore, all the more frightening.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

watching.

INTERN
And call Dr. Bentley! He's down in emergency working with a header.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

NURSE WATKINS
(on phone)
Trach tube quickly! We have a patient in Ward Sixteen that's having a stroke!

NURSE MATTHEWS
Blood pressure sixty over forty and falling.

INTERN
Trach set!

NURSE WATKINS
(on phone)
Page Dr. Bentley! Emergency!

Nurse Matthews paints Halluska's neck with iodine.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

watching.

NURSE MATTHEWS
Straight line on the EKG.

Sound reverberates from the corridor:

VOICE
Paging Dr. Bentley. Emergency! Emergency, Ward Sixteen! Ward Sixteen!

The Intern begins to pound on Halluska's chest.

NURSE MATTHEWS
Straight line. You can stop now.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

watching incredulously.

CLOSE UP - HALLUSKA

his face seems oddly at peace now. The struggles he has had with his family, the struggles he had trying to find something worthwhile to live for the next day gone now. But there is still a trace of that struggle of life.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

staring at Halluska.

CONTINUED

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

Skag is making his way with the walker. The crushing events of the past evening have had an enormous effect on Skag. Skag passes the Hospital Storage Room.

FIRST INTERN'S VOICE
Jesus, only four more weeks and I'm getting out of here. What a depressing rotation.

SKAG'S P.O.V.

partially opened door to Hospital Storage Room. Two Interns are washing up.

FIRST INTERN'S VOICE
The guy who died last night, I saw him from the time he came in.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

listening.

INT. HOSPITAL STORAGE ROOM - DAY

Two Interns are washing up at the sink.

FIRST INTERN
I did his history, his physio-therapy. Here he was, almost ready to go home, and he dies.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

Skag continues to walk slowly.

INT. STORAGE ROOM - DAY

SECOND INTERN
Were you at the autopsy this morning?

FIRST INTERN
No.

SECOND INTERN
Well, I was there. You should have seen it. What a mess. When they took off his skull, it was soft like a mass of white jello.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

CLOSE UP - SKAG

shocked, thinking of the man that was Halluska.

FIRST INTERN'S VOICE
Four more weeks and we're getting out of this vegetable garden. Either they're stroked out and helpless or they die. Nobody ever gets better.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

he begins to walk again on walker. He seems older, defeated. Continued to walk in silence.

INT. STROKE WARD - MORNING

Jo enters. She is carrying a box of carmel corn, Skag's favorite candy. She stands staring at the empty bed.

JO
Where is he?

IZZAK
I don't know. He hasn't been here since before they turned the lights on.

Nurse Watkins comes in.

JO
Where is my husband?

CLOSE UP - NURSE WATKINS

NURSE WATKINS
It's too early for physical therapy.

They start toward the corridor.

NURSE WATKINS
Maybe he's just using the walker.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

They look down the corridor. Nurse Watkins turns to Nurse Matthews who works at the desk in the corridor.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

NURSE WATKINS
Have you seen Mr. Skagzka?

NURSE MATTHEWS
No, I noticed his bed was empty at breakfast.

NURSE WATKINS
What about the cafeteria?

NURSE MATTHEWS
I tried that.

NURSE WATKINS
What about the waiting rooms?

NURSE MATTHEWS
He's not in any of them.

NURSE WATKINS
Any of the other wards?

NURSE MATTHEWS
No.

Dr. Moscone is walking down the corridor toward them.

DR. MOSCONE
(briskly)
Morning, Mrs. Skagzka.

JO
I'm trying to find my husband.

DR. MOSCONE
Miss Watkins?

NURSE WATKINS
We're trying to find him.

DR. MOSCONE
(with humor)
We don't ask much, Miss Watkins. Just don't lose the patients. Try the cafeteria.

NURSE MATTHEWS
I've tried it. He's not there.

DR. MOSCONE
He probably visited some other ward.

NURSE MATTHEWS
No.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

CLOSE UP - DR. MOSCONE

now beginning to be concerned.

JO
He's been so depressed since the death of Mr. Halluska.

DR. MOSCONE
How long has he been missing?

Clarence, who is passing, stops, taking in the situation at a glance.

NURSE MATTHEWS
Must be over half an hour now.

Dr. Moscone takes Nurse Matthews over to the side.

DR. MOSCONE
(trying to control his temper)
Why didn't you let security know? Has anybody looked up on the roof?

NURSE MATTHEWS
(sensing what he means immediately)
No.

JO
What is this? What's going on? Tell me. Is there something wrong?

DR. MOSCONE
Clarence. Up on the roof!

Clarence runs toward the elevator.

CLOSE UP - JO

watches Clarence, becoming more and more concerned.

Dr. Moscone starts toward the telephone.

JO
Come on, tell me! What does the roof have to with it?! What are you all so scared about?!

NURSE MATTHEWS
Sometimes stroke patients get very depressed. I'm sure Mr. Skagzka is alright.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

JO
What does the roof have to do with it?

CLOSE UP - NURSE MATTHEWS

speaks quietly.

NURSE MATTHEWS
One of the men made his way to the top of the building in the elevator and when no one was looking, he threw himself off.

CLOSE UP - JO
alarmed.

DR. MOSCONE
(simultaneously on phone)
We want every room, every toilet, every ward, every waiting room in this building searched.

He stops suddenly.

CLOSE UP - DR. MOSCONE

startled, he is looking at something down the hall.

CLOSE UP - JO

startled.

JO'S POV

There is Skag, walking down the hall in his street clothes. He is limping, making his way by leaning against the wall.

SKAG
(triumphant)
I took a walk around the whole goddammed block!

INT. HOSPITAL WARD - DAY

Skag is finishing dressing in his street clothes. He speaks jauntily, triumphantly to Jo:

SKAG
Did yougive the girls the boxes of candy?

JO
Everybody, including the dietician.
(a dig)
She didn't know who you were.

SKAG
Ah-ha, you didn't expect her to crack to my wife.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

David enters wheeling wheelchair, Patricia and Barbara follow.

SKAG
(to David)
A little Puerto Rican number. She got the chocolate-covered cherries.

DAVID
Candy from Schrafts -- drug store candy. Big deal!

SKAG
Maybe too big! You know what they feed us around here? Baby food!
(appreciative chuckle from ward patients. Skag raises his voice, looking around)
Yeah, baby food right out of the jar! Is that right fellows? I'm Serbian. Only Jo knows how to cook for me.

PATRICIA
(laughing)
She's not Serbian.

SKAG
Maybe she'll make it one day.
(answering Jo's disparaging cluck)
You stick with me, kid...keep the sarma, palenta, and blood sausages comin'; and I'll see that you get an honorary membership in the Society of the Associated Serbian Cooks of the World!

PATRICIA
(marvelling)
You're like your old self!

SKAG
(snapping at her as if she had said a bad thing)
I'm not like my old self!
(covering with a laugh)
Better. A damn sight better!

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

Skag sees the wheelchair.

SKAG
Who needs this?!

DAVID
It's the only way they'll let you out of here.

Skag gets into the wheelchair.

SKAG
Okay. Push!

David starts to push. They move past Izzak's bed. Skag indicates for David to stop. David wheels Skag in front of Izzak's bed.

Izzak has tears in his eyes.

IZZAK
(a touch of jealousy)
You must have connections. I was here when you came, now you're leaving and I'm still here. The game is rigged.

SKAG
You'll be rolling out of here soon.

IZZAK
Maybe in a box.

SKAG
(lowering his voice so that only Izzak can hear)
Don't say it, don't evey think it!
(deep emotion)
None of us working stiffs can afford to die. The big wheels, even the Social Security, they're all betting that we won't live to collect what we've already paid in! We'll outwit them! We've got to collect everything that's coming to us!

Izzak tries to smile, a twisted grimace.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

ANOTHER ANGLE

as Skag rolls again to another bed, waving to patients along the way. He stops opposite Tim.

TIM
You fooled 'em all, Skag!

SKAG
Don't you worry about anything, Tim.

TIM
Me, worry? Hell, this is the first vacation I've had in fifteen years.
(sadly)
If nobody ever comes to see me, that's fine with me. I don't need the aggravation.

SKAG
If your family don't come, I'll come back to see you myself.

Tim is pathetically grateful.

TIM
You won't come back, you just say that now. Nobody comes back 'till they get another stroke, so you won't be back.

SKAG
I'll come back.

Tim holds up one hand, more in farewell than just a goodbye.

STILL ANOTHER ANGLE

as David rolls Skag to the door.

Skag is caught by the sight of the new arrival, MACKLIN, occupying the last bed near the door. Macklin is a thin, Black man. He has a tube in his throat, but he strains

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to watch Skag with entreating eyes. We can see that Skag has had enough, but he cannot pass him by. Almost relucatantly, he signals David to stop by Macklin.

SKAG
I don't believe we've been properly introduced. I'm Skag. I know you're Macklin.

CLOSE UP - MACKLIN

looking at Skag appalled, in the same way that Skag looked at Dr. Moscone in the first scene.

SKAG
You're a tailor for Richman Brothers. That's a big firm, isn't it? I've seen their commercials on TV. You must have handled a lot of responsibility working for a firm like that.

CLOSE UP - MACKLIN

looking at Skag appalled, looking as though life has raped him and he doesn't know why.

SKAG
I've been through it. The first day is the worst. If you can get through the first day, you got it made!

Macklin looks at him with eyes that are wide opened; he still cannot say a word but he is struggling to speak.

CLOSE UP - MACKLIN

He seems now to be relating to Skag.

We see his mouth forming soundlessly the word, a repetition of Skag's first quiety:

MACKLIN
(breathing it)
Wh...why?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

SKAG
You'll be fine.

ANGLE TO SKAG

looks up at David, gestures.

SKAG
(to David)
Get me the hell out of here.

David pushes Skag in the wheelchair out of the ward. Jo, Patricia andBarbara follow. Inadvertently, he turns back.

SKAG'S POV

In diminishing perspective, we seethe mained, the halt, all straining forward, trying to see Skag as he leaves. It is as though some vibrant life has gone out of the room that cannot be replaced. Those that can have lifted their hands in a pitiful gesture that turns out not goodbye, but more like a farewell.

INT. WARD - DAY

We feel as though there are some who will not make it because Skag has left this ward. As he is exiting from the room, life is going out with Skag and death remains.

INT. CAR - DAY

The car pulls up in frontof Skag's house with David, Patricia and Barbara in the frontseat and Jo and Skag in the back seat. Patricia goes in the back and extends a hand to Skag.

SKAG
Don't help me.

CLOSE UP - BARBARA

understanding whathe is feeling.

BARBARA
We're going to go shopping right away and get you some new pajamas and slippers.

PATRICIA
I hated that baggy night shirt they made you wear in the hospital, even though it did give you a chance to show off your legs.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

BARBARA
Wait till you see the ones we're going to get you.

PATRICIA
Passionate blue.

Barbara bends over.

BARBARA
(kisses him)
I love you, Dad.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

recoiling inadvertently.

Skag gets out of the car.

Patricia starts the car, Barbara beside her. It goes off.

Skag starts to walk limping toward the house. After a few steps Skag turns to David.

SKAG
How about giving me and Jo a break. We haven't had two minutes together since I got sick.

CLOSE UP - DAVID

understanding, yet still surprised.

DAVID
Sure, Dad. I'll go over to Noonan's Bar. It's about that time.

SKAG
It's always about that time for you.

DAVID
See you later, Jo.

Skag continues to walk. Jo comes over to assist him.

SKAG
I don't need any help.

He enters the house.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

CLOSE UP - SKAG
looking around the house. It seems to have a different appearance to him now. There is a "Welcome Home" banner.

CONTINUED

JO
The kids fixed up the sign.

Skag looks at it. He seems to look at it unsentimentally, as if unimpressed.

JO
I'll fix you a drink. Dr. Moscone said it's good for you.

She goes to the bar, starts pouring a bourbon.

Skag limps and walks up the stairs.

CLOSE UP - JO

looks after him wondering.

Then she finishes pouring the drink. Jo makes her way up the stairs carrying the drink. She hears Skag in the bedroom. She goes in.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Skag is beginning to unbutton his shirt.

SKAG
Take off your clothes.

CLOSE UP - JO

startled.

She puts down the drink and begins to unbutton her blouse.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

The blinds are drawn. Skag sits in a chair in his robe, not moving. Jo stands in her slip, concerned.

JO
It's alright, Pete. It'll come back. The doctor said this was bound to happen at first. Don't be so impatient. Have a little patience.
(laughs)
You never did have any patience.

CONTINUED

SKAG
(deeply disturbed but tries to cover it up with humor and the wonder of life)
This is the first time this has happened to me since I was seventeen. There was a girl I saw at the chorus of the Casino Burlesque Theater. I walked around town for a month with an erection thinking about her. I hung around the stage door. I asked her out to dinner. I always looked older than I was. After two dates, I spent all my money for a room at the William Penn Hotel. Then when I got her to bed I couldn't perform.

JO
(laughs)
You'll be able to perform.

SKAG
Supposing I don't.
(pauses)
Hell, sex isn't everything no matter what Hemmingway and Penthouse say.

Jo laughs.

JO
Of course not.

SKAG
(with gallows humor)
I just might slit my throat, however.

Jo laughs.

SKAG
Supposing I can't ever get it back, Jo. The way I can't remember Atlantic City. You're a person of great desires. So am I. It would be the end of our marriage, wouldn't it?

JO
No, it wouldn't Pete. I could never do it with anybody else in the world again. I wouldn't do it with anybody without you. Hell, I'm forty-six! What's the big deal?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

CLOSE UP - SKAG

SKAG
(quietly)
It is a big deal with you.
Don't kid me.

CLOSE UP - JO

knows it's a big deal with her.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

staring at her, remembering the desolation of the men in the ward because of the readjustment of their families.

INT. DINING ROOM - SKAG'S HOUSE

Jo, David, John, Petar, Patricia and Barbara are sitting around the dinner table. They are all trying self-consciously to be themselves - over-trying. We begin to see that without Skag as a unifying spirit, they are more a group of individuals than a family. It is as if they had previously been cast in Skag's play, his vision of life, and now that he has withdrawn the script, they are unsure of their life roles. Barbara has taken over the job of spoon-feeding old Petar. Unconsciously she mimics Skag as she tends the old man. The family almost frenetically tries to recreate life the way it was before Skag's illness.

JO
(to all, obliquely
to Skag)
I was talking with Strina at
the laundromat, Marko's wife.
(to Skag)
They want us to go with them
tonight to the church.

Skag, we sense, is himself and yet not himself. It's as though he is a ghost of himself trying to recreate the Skag that we saw in the beginning.

BARBARA
He has a new station wagon, Dad.

DAVID
It's a Dodge R.V., Dad. That
means it rides like a truck, looks
like a van.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

PATRICIA
It's painted in psychedelic stripes, it's not your style.

JOHN
Whatta you mean, not his style? You're with it, right, Dad?

Skag is nodding, smiling, forcing a little laugh where appropriate -- and sometimes where not appropriate. Barbara, intent on the conversation, has missed old Petar's mouth with the spoon. Jo speaks much too sharply to her:

JO
Wipe Grampa's mouth!
(obliquely, but to Skag)
Tonight is the final tryout for the operetta.

DAVID
Ol' Marko thinks he's going to get the lead part.

BARBARA
You ought to do it, Dad.

PATRICIA
You'll never forgive yourself if Marko beats you out of the part.

CLOSE UP - JOHN

trying to reach his father desperately. We can see by the way he says this that he has thought about not coming to see his father earlier and that it has troubled him deeply.

JOHN
Dad. You understand why I couldn't come when you had the stroke, don't you? It was a question of either my coming or my flunking the exams.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

It's apparent that John's not coming is a traumatic experience that he'll neverforget but he does not want to concern John about it. Besides, it seems so long ago.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

JOHN
(pauses, laughs, trying to say it lightly)
After all, I'm not the genius you think I am.

Skag nods.

JOHN
Look, Dad, I don't think it makes any sense to continue on at John Hopkins, do you?

CLOSE UP - JOHN

he is waiting to have Skag say that, of course, it's necessary to continue, but Skag doesn't answer.

DAVID
(sharply)
I thought we weren't going to talk about this today.

JOHN
(insistent)
But I want Dad to know how I feel about him! How I know houw much he sacrified for me!

DAVID
(pointedly)
I know you want him to understand, But it's more imporatnt that we think about his feelings, that you might be upsetting him.

JOHN
(continuing nevertheless)
I figured out how much it'll cost you to send me through post-graduate -- thousands nad thousands of dollars. It's ridiculous. There are smaller schools that are just as good. I have some brochures here; we could go over them together.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

CLOSE UP - SKAG

he is merely protraying a role of his former self.

DAVID
(sharply)
You decided to go to a smaller college. Let's leave it at that.

JOHN
But I want Dad to know what I'm doing! It always meant so much to him!
(looks at Skag)

CLOSE UP - SKAG

he does not seem to be listening to him.

CLOSE UP - JOHN

startled that Skag is not putting up a protest.

The phone rings.

JO
Hello...? Hello...?
(pauses)
Who is this...?!

SKAG
(amused)
Is that for Patricia? Did you tell him she wasn't in?

JO
No, it was one of those hangup calls.
(mystified and upset)
Then sombody laughs in the background.

Jo sits down, begins to brood about the phone call.

PATRICIA
(trying to ask advice but she really has no need of it)
Did I tell you, Dad, I'm working behind the counter at the boutique in the Braddock Shopping Center.
(MORE)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

PATRICIA (cont'd)
(laughs)
I have to wear my track shoes to work. The manager, Hal Anderson... he started breathing heavy when I walked in the place. He's a gootball hero, Dad, handsome, married, and with a two-moth old baby. Vain as a peacock. He's always trying to grab me behind the counter. I know how you are, Dad, but don't you go down there and say anything to him. I just want to know how to handle it, how to let him know it'l no, but not insult him and still keep my job.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

nods politely.

BARBARA
I'm on a new diet, you'll be glad to hear, Dad. It's number one hundred fifteen. The idea is not to feed your stomach but to feed your appestat. You think it will work, Dad? I have my own ideas - you don't get fat by eating - fat is catching. I think the solution for me will be surgery. Maybe John could become a plastic surgeon and just carve it off.

Jo, finally bursting out without being able to contain herself:

JO
(indicates Barbara)
Pete, I want you totalk to her. She didn't come in all night!

DAVID
(to Barbara)
What's the matter with you?! Why do you have to put these things on Dad when he's just come out of the hospital!

PATRICIA
Leave her alone. Do you think you're such a great man! You're
(MORE)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

PATRICIA (cont'd)
half drunk now. And what about Joyce - what happened? She came over yesterday and she was crying so hard she could hardly talk. You don't live with a woman for two and a half years and then you don't give a goddamm.

John changes the subject, thinking it will please his father, asking him his advice and the reassurance of the presence of his father.

JOHN
Audrey and I are thinking about getting married. That would take some of the load off. I know you didn't seem to care too much for her, Dad, but she's an intelligent girl.

DAVID
Not half as intelligent as she thinks she is.

JOHN
Who asked you? Her folks have momey and she even has some in her own right from her grandparents who founded the department store. It's not love at first sight but that doesn't really exist, does it, Dad? She's kind of put the ultimatum to me.

SKAG
Shut up! Shut up all of you!

Skag goes. Jo follows Skag out.

INT. PORCH - NIGHT

CLOSE UP - JO

looking at Skag, feeling for him.

SKAG
Those people in there - they aren't real to me. The ward and what happened there - that's real to me. My own problems - whether or not I'll be able to be a man again, that
(MORE)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

SKAG (cont'd)
I can understand. I can't solve their problems. I can't even solve my own, and I'm not going to pretend that I can.

Skag walks away from her, back into the house.

INT. PETAR'S BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Skag stands looking at his father, Petar. The old man is sleeping. Suddenly Petar awakes with a start.

SKAG
Tata. Do you know I've been sick?

CLOSE UP - PETAR

looking at his son. He knows his son has been sick and is very distressed and confused about it but really doesn't want to face it.

SKAG
You must have missed me feeding you, dressing you for church...

CLOSE UP - PETAR

looking at his son, but refusing to accept the fact that his strong, able son, who has meant so much to his survival, is ill. Skag cries out:

SKAG
I've had a stroke, Tata. There's been an explosion in my head!

CLOSE UP - PETAR

frightened. He is frightened of Skag and the emotion he is expressing. He is recoiling from him and the responsibility of his son, the same as Skag has recoiled from his own children.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

realizing his father is completely alienated in his own world, that he does not have a father, that he is alone.

SKAG
It's like I woke up and everything I've lived by, believed in, trusted - it's all scattered around!

He goes over, puts his arms around his father, but his father cannot comprehend what Skag is saying.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

He feels more alone than ever.

EXT. CAR

Through the windshield we see the passing scene: One gigantic furnace after another numbered: 10, 9, 8, etc.... Skag stops at number three, parking the car at a wooden gate on the side.

SKAG
(to gatekeeper)
Hi, do I need a pass?

GATEKEEPER
Does Lillian need a pass to the White House? Back to work?

SKAG
No, just seeing the boys.

CLOSE ON CAR

We see Skag get out of the car and then as an afterthought toss his cane back in the car. After a beat, he squares his shoulders and walks without a limp through the gate into the mill locker room.

INT. LOCKER ROOM

Skag, after a beat, opens his locker, dons his hardhat and goggles and walks toward furnace yard.

INT. NUMBER THREE FURNACE YARD

In front of him stretches the black floor of the open hearth. And in far b.g. is the raised pulpit. The puddlers are cleaning up after a successful pour. Great clouds of steam arise from the heated hearth as workmen use hoses to play streams of water across it. Up on the pulpit, the gang boss, a young man barely turned thirty, is directing the job. This is Skag's temporary replacement. We see David on one of the hoses.

LONG SHOT - SKAG'S P.O.V.

The young gang boss, WHALEN, does not use the rungs to descend the ladder from the pulpit, he slides down like a young athlete. One of the puddler's hoses is fouled up.

PUDDLER #1
(putting him on)
Hey, Whalen, you musta been a fireman!

PUDDLER #2
(cradling a bunch of fags, in falsetto)
Fireman, fireman - save my child!

We see David watching from one side of the hearth. Whalen, in a feat of brute strength, takes up the twisted hose and shakes it along its entire length to get out the kinks.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

WHALEN
(shouting)
Any the rest of you fags need a man to do you job, call me!
(looking upward)
Hey, Paczka.

High above in the cab of his crane, we see Paczka drinking coffee from a vacuum flask.

WHALEN (cont'd)
Get on the ball; where do you think you are? In my crew there are no coffee breaks!

CLOSE SHOT - SKAG

standing well back, just taking it in.

Then comes a loud cry of recognition from the Black Puddler:

BLACK PUDDLER'S VOICE
Hey...Skag Iron!

DAVID
Hi, Dad. I'm glad you came. It'll give the guys a lift.

SKAG
Looks to me like they're doing alright.

WHALEN
What the hell is this? What kind of a chicken outfit have I got here? Break it up, we got a furnace to load!

The hearth, SKAG'S P.O.V.:

The puddlers are rapidly converging on Skag, but with a suggestion of reluctance -- almost as if his presence is a little embarrassing. AD LIB GREETINGS: "What you say!"; "Hey, glad to see you!"; "Shape up. It's the ridin' boss."; "When you coming back?", etc., etc.

MED SHOT

They surround him, vying to shake his hand.

ANGLE TO WHALEN

He comes charing like a bull across the hearth to intercept David. He has not seen Skag, and does not know what's happening.

CONTINUED

WHALEN
(then he sees Skag and stops, apologetic)
Gee, I'm sorry, Mr. Skagzka, I didn't...

SKAG
It's okay.

WHALEN
I've seen you...but you probably don't remember me. Jim Whalen from Number Ten.
(they shake hands)
This is my first crack out as foreman. I knew I could do it but I had to show them.

DAVID
Dad's just gone temporarily. He's going to be back as foreman.

SKAG
I'm not so sure of that. From what I can see, you're doing a job.

WHALEN
Thanks. Coming from you...Well, you know what I mean.

SKAG
I know what you mean.

WHALEN
You left me a pretty fair crew.

DAVID
Only fair?

SKAG
They moved for me.

WHALEN
Well, I wish you would stick around and show me how to do it. Maybe you could teach me how to use some of those swear words in Polish.

DAVID
We're Serbian--but what the hell--Russian, Hungarian, Israeli or Swaheli, it's all Polish to you, right?

CONTINUED

After a hard stare, Whalen deliberately turns his back to David, speaks to Skag:

WHALEN
I know the job you've done around here. Believe me, do I know. Goddammed company should have given you a medal and run the flags up to half mast when you broke down.
(grumbling)
Baseball's got Cooperstown, football's got its hall of fame even. But what have we got? You work yourself out and it's finito, the bone yard. Makes me want to save my money for the time I'll have to pack it in.

DAVID
What are you trying to say? Are you trying to say he's washed up?

WHALEN
I'm not saying anything of the kind. What's bothering you?

DAVID
You been shooting off your mouth - well, he can spot you half a day and still tap out before you do.

WHALEN
Time moves on kid. You had better get used to that.

DAVID
I'm not used to anything about you. You want to get ahead so bad it's coming out of your ears!

SKAG
Cool it.

CLOSE UP - WHALEN

wondering whether to take David on.

CLOSE UP - DAVID

looking at Whalen challengingly.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

Whalen decides to let it pass, looks at David smugly.

WHALEN
Okay, guys, it's a long job and a short time. Let's hit it!

As the men ad lib a few scattered goodbyes and straggle back to the job, we hear the voice of the Black puddler:

BLACK PUDDLER'S VOICE
"Goin' on down
to Camp Sixteen
Where the work ain't hard
And the boss ain't mean,
Where the cooks is dirty
But the food's clean."

David walks toward the entrance with Skag.

DAVID
I'd like to take on that Whalen myself! Did you ever see such an arrogant bastard?

SKAG
He wants to get ahead. I was the same when I was a kid. How do you think I got the job?

DAVID
But wouldn't you like to take him down a peg?

SKAG
Forget it! It's not important. Pride, outdoing the other guy, being number one, I'm done with that kid crap! One thing I know now. I'm replaceable. Everybody's replaceable.

Skag goes out of the gate, leaving David staring after him. Skag's slight limp is now more pronounced.

INT. SKAG'S HOME, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jo, Joh, Patricia and Barbara are sitting about the room in various states of tension. David has just entered.

DAVID
How long has he been gone?

JO
He never came home after he went to the plant.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

JOHN
Was he okay when you left him?

DAVID
He was as okay as he could be.

JO
In All the time we've been married he's never done this.

JOHN
What does that mean, could be?

DAVID
Just what I said. You're a doctor. You ought to know what this is.

PATRICIA
What are we going to do?

DAVID
I don't know. Let me think a minute.

JOHN
I told you he shouldn't have left the hospital that quickly. I told you to keep every kind of stress away from him.

DAVID
Where do you get off saying that to us? We've done everything we could for him. You didn't give a damn about him 'till this happened. Now you come here every weekend. You thought he wanted to live your life for you.

CLOSE UP - JOHN

stunned. Remembering himself saying this.

DAVID (cont'd)
Now you understand what he was.

CLOSE UP - PATRICIA

CLOSE UP - BARBARA

They understand, too, and miss him more than ever.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

DAVID (cont'd)
He's gone and you miss him. That's too bad. The doctor said they never come back the same way.

CLOSE UP - JO

frightened.

DAVID (cont'd)
He'll never be the same. The old Skag. We've lost him.

JO
Don't say that, David.

DAVID
I'll try and find him.

INT. SMALL MOTEL ROOM, EAST PITTSBURGH - DAY

Skag sits watching the basketball game listlessly. He has a couple of days growth of beard. He seems older than he ever has before in the play.

David enters. He looks at his father a moment.

CLOSE UP - DAVID

startled and concerned by the way his father looks.

DAVID
What are you trying to do -- scare everybody half to death?

CLOSE UP - SKAG

startled.

SKAG
How did you find me?

DAVID
It wasn't hard. I've looked in every flea bag in East Pittsburgh. You never did have any class.
(pause)
Can't you watch the basketball game at home?
(MORE)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

DAVID (cont'd)
(pause)
Dad, what's the matter? You know how much you've worried Jo?

CLOSE UP - SKAG

he doesn't answer.

DAVID
You sure there isn't a naked go go dancer in the closet?

Skag laughs mirthlessly.

DAVID
Come on, I'll take you home.

SKAG
No, not right now.

Pause.

SKAG
I'll be home in a little while. Tell Jo I'll be home in a few days.

DAVID
Tell her yourself.

There is a moment.

CLOSE UP - DAVID

looks at Skag, wondering how to deal with him. He knows that Skag has been profoundly disturbed and David is disturbed and thrown by seeing his father this way more than anything he has ever been through. But he feels that he knows best how to deal with Skag.

DAVID
What's the matter? Scared? I thought you had more fight than that.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

looks up at David resentfully.

SKAG
Scared? Damn right I'm scared! I know what can happen to a person!

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

DAVID
(quietly)
What can happen?

Pause.

SKAG
In the hospital there was a man named Halluska in the bed next to me. A man just like me.
(bitterly)
His wife finished sentences for him. His family came to care for him less and less. He couldn't help them anymore. He couldn't go to work. He couldn't be Big Daddy anymore. They say that a stroke killed him but it was his family.

Pause.

DAVID
The family loves you.

SKAG
Do they? Patricia was scared when I was in the hospital, afraid to look at me. Barbara I don't even know. John is cold and always will be.

DAVID
You should see him now. He's scared as hell that you won't come back.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

SKAG
(bitterly)
It's because he misses the Big Daddy who put him through college, who he could always blame any failures on.

CLOSE UP - DAVID

astonished how well Skag understands John.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

smiles.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

SKAG
You didn't think I understood, did you? I didn't until I got sick.

Pause.

SKAG
I'll tell you something about Jo. Even though she loves me, if I can't make it in bed, that will go, too.

Pause.

CLOSE UP - DAVID

DAVID
Hell, you're fifty-six years old. Is this news to you?! As Tolstoy says, we're born alone, we die alone! I knew that when you shuffled me off to everybody when I was a kid, Ma, Granda, the relatives.

SKAG
(reacting automatically)
It was because we didn't have a big enough house.

DAVID
Don't give me that. It was because you felt sorry for me. It was sheer pity and nothing else and I felt it almost everyday I was in the house. That's why I moved out of the house when I was eighteen.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

moved.

SKAG
I never knew that.

DAVID
It's alright.

Pause.

SKAG
If we're all alone, then what's the use of going on?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

DAVID
I guess it's just playing out the game with the cards you're dealt.

SKAG
That's not good enough.

DAVID
It'll have to be good enough.

Pause.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

SKAG
(quietly, he has thought it all through very carefully)
What happens if I get another stroke--? I've looked up the statistics on strokes. They say the chances are fifty fifty. They'll want to do with me what John wanted to do with my father.

CLOSE UP - DAVID

listening, wandering.

SKAG (cont'd)
How long will it take? As you say, I'm fifty-six. Ten years? Fifteen years?

CLOSE UP - DAVID

moved.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

SKAG (cont'd)
In the meantime, I'll sweat my guts out, work my brains out -- for what? To wind up on the scrap heap?! They talk about Women's Lib! How about some Lib for guys like me?!

Pause.

DAVID
What choice do you have? What are you going to do? Retire? You'll fall apart just like your father did.

CONTINUED

SKAG
Maybe I'll become a beachcomber in Tahiti.

Pause.

DAVID
(whimsically)
I wonder what the wages are these days for a fifty-six year old beachcomber in Tahiti?
(pause)
What the hell, I might as well get loaded with you.
(goes to icebox, opens it)
Just beer. How can anybody drink just beer? Cheapskate!
(takes out, opens it, takes a swig from it, goes to set, turns it on)
Maybe I'll go to Tahiti with you.

SKAG
No. That would spoil it.

DAVID
Why?

SKAG
(dryly)
You'd talk me into taking Jo, Patricia and Barbara with us. Then we'd wind up taking John and building a house on the beach and we'd have the whole goddamned thing set up in Tahiti.

David laughs. They watch the game for a while.

ANNOUNCER
The unbroken string of victories of the Bruins could come to an end tonight. They have not dominated the defensive boards.

SKAG
You know. You've always loved me the most and I've never been able to give it back.

DAVID
Let's not talk about it.

ANNOUNCER
The Trojans have put on a spectacular defense. Smith goes high in the air.

CONTINUED

SKAG
You were right. I didn't want you in the house. You reminded me too much of your mother. It was such a bad time. It hurt so much.

Pause.

ANNOUNCER
...Smith takes a pass in the backcourt and is fouled...by Billy Mason...that's three fouls on Mason...

DAVID
I know.

ANNOUNCER
He plucks the ball right off the rim and passes it the full length of the court.

SKAG
I don't know if I'll ever be able to love you as much as I should.

DAVID
That's alright, Dad.

ANNOUNCER
Davis dribbles to the outside. It's a pic! He's in the clear!

A groan comes up from the audience. It's obvious that Davis has missed the basket.

DAVID
(tries to fight back tears)
What's the matter with that bum Davis? He can't make a simple layup.

They continue to watch the game. There are tears in David's ey

INT. SKAG'S HOUSE

Skag, unshaven, walks in with David. Jo puts her arms around Skag. Skag pushes her off and holds her at arms length.

SKAG
I'm sorry.

JO
Are you made at me, Pete? Did I do something?

SKAG
No, I don't know where I'm going, Jo. I don't know if I'll even stay.

He goes upstairs. She watches him.

INT. HEARTH MANAGER'S OFFICE - DAY

This is a glassed-in area where the hearth manager, FISHER, has his desk. Through glass we can see the floor of the hearth in full operation, but the sound is muted.

Skag enters with Hawkins, the shop steward. Fisher rises to shake hands.

In near b.g., in a conservative suit, is Mr. Bishop, a wheel from the front office. Although merely an observer, he exerts a powerful presence and all glance furtively at him during scene to get his reaction.

FISHER
Glad you could come.

SKAG
I feel okay.

FISHER
You've been gone from the plant four months now. Any idea about what you're going to do?

SKAG
Not yet.

BISHOP
But you must have some idea.

SKAG
No, I don't.

BISHOP
Well, there's something we want to talk to you about. In fairness to you, we wanted the shop steward to sit in on it.

SKAG
On what?

Fisher rises and begins to pace like an executive.

FISHER
First of all, I want you to know that your job is not in jeopardy.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

face tightening.

FISHER (cont'd)
You're a legend around here. We hope you'll be with us until you retire.

SKAG
(quietly, dryly)
Thanks.

There's an awkward pause.

FISHER
Yes sir, you've got a job here as long as you want it. Nobody is moving you out.

Fisher clears his throat, glancing back toward Bishop.

FISHER
We know you've got a couple of years coming before retirement...
(as Skag nods)
We'd like to make those years as easy as possible.

SKAG
Why don't you just tell me what you want...? You don't have to set me up.

FISHER
I don't know about strokes, but I do know you're working around very dangerous things here.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

looking at Fisher.

FISHER
You're getting up there. Maybe it's best that we make way for the young men coming up.

SKAG
Are you saying you want Whalen to take over my crew?

FISHER
We'd find a place for you. Something not so demanding.

SKAG
Like what?

FISHER
Well, there are many possibilities... You could be on one of the gates.

SKAG
Gatekeeper?

The union steward, with an eye on Mr. Bishop, puts his hand on Skag's shoulder.

HAWKINS
There'd only be a slight reduction in pay. The union will insist on that!

SKAG
(with contempt)
You're in on it, too, huh?
(to Fisher)
What do you need my permission for?

ANGLE TO SHOW THE FLOOR OF THE HEARTH

Fisher, after a glance outward, speaks a little lamely:

FISHER
Well, the men are going to be a little upset.

Skag turns to look out at the men.

SKAG'S P.O.V.

the men of Skag's crew have gathered to watch the office from a distance. They are speaking among themselves. Their attitude is vaguely threatening.

SKAG
(grim humor)
A little?

FISHER
(a grudging confession)
Well, more than a little. But they'll accept the change if it's what you want.

SKAG
I don't know what I want, except I'll tell you this. You're trying to tell me I'm not twenty-six, I'm fifty-six. You're trying to tell me I'm not worth as much, but I think I am in spite of the stroke. If I want to do it, I think I could do a job as good as I ever did. I learned it the hard way that I still have a lot of value. I don't know if I want the job. If I don't want to work, I don't want you to give me a free ride. I'll let you know.

ANGLE TO BISHOP

he steps forward shushing Fisher. Hawkins cringes and fawns like a house pup.

BISHOP
(to Skag)
We make steel. That's what we're here for, you and I. Is that right?

SKAG
That's true, Mr. Bishop.

BISHOP
It's my job to keep production up. If a machine breaks down, we replace it -- if a man breaks down, we replace him. We've got a good record here on Number Eight. Nothing must interfere with that.

SKAG
It's the men who run the machines who make the records, Mr. Bishop.

Bishop thinks it over.

FISHER
Skag, be reasonable. What would you do if you were in my shoes?

BISHOP
We're looking out for you, too.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

smiling a little.

SKAG
Are you?

FISHER
Will you talk to the men now?

SKAG
I'll think about it.

He closes the door behind him.

INT. SKAG'S HOME, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Skag in his bathrobe walks restlessly around. He is obviously weighing the decision about what to do with the rest of his life.

JO
What do you want for dinner?

SKAG
Don't rush me. It's my big decision of the day.

JO
You can have chicken curry or beef stroganoff.

SKAG
How about corned beef hash?

JO
Corned beef hash?

SKAG
With the poached egg on it.

JO
It comes out of a can.

SKAG
I know. I like it that way. You've been chicken currying and beef storganoffing me to death. This isn't a goddamned French restaurant and I don't need to be babied.

The phone rings.

JO
All right. Corned beef hash.

She goes.

SKAG
(on phone)
Hello. Who is this? What are you calling and hanging up for? Tell me who you are!

CLOSE UP - SKAG

disturbed.

He hangs up. He goes into the kitchen, puzzled.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

SKAG
Jo, what are these calls? Someone calls, doesn't say anything, then when I speak to them, they hang up.
(MORE)

SKAG (cont'd)
(disturbed)
This time they laughed.

CLOSE UP - JO

She has a feeling what it is but doesn't want to trouble Skag.

JO
I don't know.

SKAG
I don't like it. Is somebody calling for Patricia?

Door slams in living room. Skag goes into living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Patricia enters.

PATRICIA
I didn't know I had so many places to grab. He just won't give up so I quit. It was either a question of slipping saltpeter into his lunch or giving up the ghost. They're talking to me about modeling some dresses at Kaufmann's at the restaurant during lunch.

SKAG
If you think you were pinched at the shopping center, wait until you try modeling dresses in Kaufmann's. You had better move fast or those white collar guys with Westinghouse that come to lunch there will pinch you black and blue.

PATRICIA
I'm fast on my feet, Dad.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

looking at her wonderingly.

SKAG
What are you going to do with your life? You've been out of high school a year now.

PATRICIA
I don't know. Maybe I'll be a model. I was thinking of doing some acting at the Pittsburgh Playhouse. What do you think, Dad?

SKAG
It's up to you.

PATRICIA
People tell me I'm pretty, but what good does it do if I don't know what to do with it?

SKAG
I don't give advice anymore. It's something you're going to have to work out for yourself.

PATRICIA
Alright, Dad.

SKAG
There are a lot of strange calls that come into this house. I never noticed it before. I guess it's because I'm hanging around the house now. What the hell is it? Is it somebody calling you? It seems like more than one person.

CLOSE UP - PATRICIA

She knows what it is but doesn't want to tell Skag.

PATRICIA
Probably. You know there are a lot of nuts around and I seem to know all of them.

SKAG
I know you have half of East Pittsburgh in heat.

Patricia goes upstairs. Skag stands thinking a moment. Barbara enters. Skag looks at Barbara. His interest in her since his illness seems to be more intense.

SKAG
Hi.

BARBARA
Hi.

SKAG
It's six o'clock. Been working with the retarded kids?

BARBARA
Yeah.

SKAG
Tell me about them.

CLOSE UP - BARBARA

surprised. He never wanted to know before.

BARBARA
You never wanted to know before.

SKAG
I would like to know now.

BARBARA
What do you want to know?

SKAG
For instance, what did you do today? Just today.

BARBARA
I spent some time with a boy whose family left him there.

SKAG
Left him there?

BARBARA
Yes. They have to leave them there and, of course, the first day is the hardest.

SKAG
Yes, it must be.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

envisioning it in his mind's eye.

BARBARA
All of a sudden, they're left in a place and their mother and father are gone. They're crying. They're going through hell. How do you tell somebody that their mother and father are never coming back?

SKAG
Why do you put yourself through that?

BARBARA
Somebody has to do it. I'm kind of honored that they think that I should be the one to do it. They're very careful about who stays with them that first day.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

moved, finding himself more and more interested in Barbara, wondering why he has never known her and if she has been the same way all the time.

INT. SKAG'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Skag lies awake. Phone rings. Skag picks it up, holding it to his ear without speaking. He waits.

CONTINUED

VOICE
(finally)
Hello, Barbara?

SKAG
You're the one that called before and laughed and hung up. What are you calling Barbara for?

There is a sharp click.

EXT. SKAG'S HOME, YARD - DAY

Phone rings.

Skag sits with Petar on the porch. Skag's POV we see Barbara run upstairs quickly for phone. Skag waits a minute, picks up phone right inside of door and covers receiver so that he will not be heard.

BARBARA'S VOICE
It's not easy to get away.

VOICE
You promised.

BARBARA'S VOICE
I know I promised but I don't know whether I'm going to make it.

VOICE
Listen, you be there, Diplomat Hotel, eight o'clock. I promised Bill.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

stunned and wondering.

EXT. DIPLOMAT HOTEL - NIGHT

A cheap motel in downtown Pittsburgh.

Skag enters.

INT. DIPLOMAT HOTEL LOBBY

Skag looks around.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

CLOSE UP - SKAG

about to go to the desk clerk and ask him about Barbara but he doesn't have quit the stomach for the confrontation. There is the feeling underneath that something too much would bring on another stroke. He looks about. There is a small bar off to the side before the desk. Skag turns and goes into it.

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

The bar is deserted except for two boys who seem too young to be in the place. The two boys sit talking. Skag sits at the edge of the bar.

BILL
How much did they clip you for the room?

FRED
Eighteen dollars.

BILL
For this flea bag.

Waitress comes to Skag.

SKAG
Beer.

BILL
Eighteen dollars. Was it worth it?

FRED
You were so horny tonight.

BILL
We're great cocksmen. We have to wind up with the pig.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

listening, not wanting to face the fact they they may be talking about Barbara. He knows they are talking about her but he cannot bring himself to believe it. Waitress brings Skag's beer.

FRED
Is she up there now?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

BILL
She's up there now. Fat and sassy and waiting.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

putting a hand over his face, feeling the room spin before him.

FRED
God, she must have taken on everyone in the class.

BILL
You don't have to turn on the lights when you do it.

FRED
(with recriminations for the unkind way they are talking about her)
She isn't so bad. I kind of feel sorry for her.

BILL
Come on. She's the biggest pig in school. She's the class joke.

Skag drinks his beer with shaking hand.

BILL
Hey, can I have a drink?

WAITRESS
Are you old enough?

BILL
Are you kidding. I'm old enough. I'm twenty-two.

WAITRESS
You look like you don't have any fuzz on your face.

BILL
Bring me a scotch and stop talking. We had better get up there or she'll be gone.

FRED
We should only be so lucky.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

BILL
Then what the hell did you spend eighteen dollars for?

FRED
What room is it?

BILL
Two-twenty-five.

FRED
Maybe I ought to go up now.

He pauses nevertheless.

BILL
Bring him a drink. He needs the courage.

Skag shakily gets up, goes to lobby. Camera follows him to the lobby. There is a couple behind him. It's a middle-aged man and a Latin-looking woman, rather attractive, in her late thirties. The man and the woman are laughing. The man places his hand lightly on the woman's breast.

WOMAN
(reprovingly)
Hal...!
(indicates Skag)

The man removes his hand.

HAL
Here we go. Our own little den of iniquity.

The woman laughs. The elevator stops. Skag gets out. There is laughter from the elevator as the door closes.

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Skag walks down the hall. He pauses before Room 225.

BARBARA'S VOICE
Come in.

Skag goes in.

CONTINUED

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

Barbara is sitting on a chair before a small table at the window. She is smoking a cigarette, obviously agitated and nervous.

CLOSE UP - BARBARA

sees Skag, startled.

BARBARA
Dad!

CLOSE UP - SKAG

Barbara's coat is hanging in the closet. Skag goes and takes the coat, holds itout for Barbara. There is a moment. Barbara puts on the coat. Skag puts his arm around her. Skag walks Barbara to door.

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Skag walks with Barbara down the corridor, his arm still around her as though protecting her from someone.

SKAG'S POV, Fred and Bill come toward them. They stop.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

stops for a moment. It seems that he will strike out at the boys. Instead, he continues down the corridor, his arm still around Barbara, not looking back.

INT. COFFEE SHOP, DOWNTOWN PITTSBURGH - NIGHT

The coffee shop is almost empty. Skag and Barbara sit in one of the seats in the back of the restaurant. Barbara is crying.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

He doesn't quite know how to deal with this. He is shaken to his very roots but he is frightened that it might bring on another stroke. This is always paramount in Skag's consciousness. He would rather die than have another stroke. He had, when he first found out, felt sympathy for Barbara, but he feels a terrible anger growing now.

SKAG
How could you do this?! How can you hold yourself so cheap--?!

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

BARBARA
Please don't be angry with me.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

realizing she is still a child after all. He speaks more gently.

SKAG
You're such a worthwhile person. You talked about the children in a way that made me understand them so well. How could you do this?

CLOSE UP - BARBARA

BARBARA
People don't care what you are! They only care about the way you look. When I try to talk to them about the way I feel they laugh at me. Please don't be angry with me! I've been so alone!

SKAG
(quietly)
Do you think this makes you any less alone?

BARBARA
Yes, it does. At least someone likes me. It seems the only way I can get somebody to like me.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

deeply moved.

SKAG
How long has it been going on?

Pause.

Barbara seems very much like a small girl now.

BARBARA
I don't know.

SKAG
(insistent)
How long?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

BARBARA
For about two years.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

shocked.

SKAG
Two years? You were thirteen.

BARBARA
Don't be so shocked. It happens to a lot of girls in my class.
(pause)
I was so alone, Dad! Nobody cared about me. No one cared what I did. No one liked me.

She continues to cry.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

profoundly moved.

INT. SKAG'S HOME, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jo is crying. Skag sits on the bed talking to her.

SKAG
You know something. I feel closer to Barbara than anyone else in the family. Maybe it's because I never knew what it was like to be an outcase before. Now I'm different like she is.
(pause)
I'm not going to let them turn hwr into a pig. I'm going to find some way to help her. I don't know how, but I will. She's been out there looking for something she should have found here, hasn't she?

CLOSE UP - JO

understanding her failure as well as Skag's.

SKAG
It does no good thinking what the past was like and whether it was better or not. We're here. It's scarey times. . . Girls lose their virginity when they're thirteen.
(MORE)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

SKAG (cont'd)
They are playing with bombs over there and all of us might go up in smoke any moment. We have to find another way to live. It's scarey but we have to do it. The past is gone.

INT. STEELMILL OFFICE - DAY

Skag stands before Fisher and Bishop. We see the men working in the b.g.

SKAG
I want to come back.

BISHOP
Sure. We'll get you something you can do, something easy.

SKAG
No, I want to come back as foreman on Eight.

CLOSE UP - BISHOP

alarm on his face.

CLOSE UP - FISHER

indignant.

SKAG
If I can't hack it, you can get somebody else. I'll be the first to know.

INT. SKAG'S HOUSE

DAVID
(beaming at the memory of it)
You should have seen Whalen's face when they said you going back.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

doesn't answer.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

JO
Is he up to going back?

DAVID
Sure. The guys will cover for him the first few days. You're a foreman, Dad. You don't have to plunge in like a puddler. Let them do all the heavy stuff. Remember. A foreman means to lead. You've always done too much. You don't have to help with the wedges, the bar -- let them do it. They know the job. You just take it easy. Pick you up at six sharp.

David seems jaunty as though Skag's coming back means a rejuvenation.

JO
Are you really up to it?

SKAG
I think so.

JO
You only think so?

SKAG
Everything that happens to me, I keep questioning whether or not it will bring another stroke on. I couldn't take that again. You feel like a trapped animal. Buried alive in your own body. One minute you're alright and the next you're lying there like a big water bug, on your back--unable to turn back over to get on your feet.

Jo puts her arms around him.

JO
Don't go

SKAG
What am I going to do? I have to. Not for the greater glory of Jones and Laughlin Steel but for myself. I have skill, I have knowledge that I got the hard way and I'm going to use them as long as I can. When I can't use them anymore, I'll find

(MORE)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

SKAG (cont'd)
something else to do. Remember my father. He became a milkman when they let him go. I'll be the same way.

She comes close to him.

JO
I love you. I'm frightened for you.

SKAG
I'm frightened, too. Like I never used to be.

JO
Twenty-seven years is a long time.

SKAG
It's a lifetime.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

They stand closer together. Standing that way, Skag feels something.

SKAG
Can we try it? It might not work out any better than it did all the other times.

JO
(laughs)
It's the middle of the morning.

SKAG
Sometimes that's the best time.

EXT. BEDROOM - DAY

The blinds are drawn. Skag and Jo lie together. It's obvious thatthis time their sexual encounter has been successful.

JO
You really think I would have gone with somebody else if we couldn't have done this?

CONTINUED

She looks at him.

SKAG
Yes, I do.

JO
How can you think that?

SKAG
Because it's the truth. That's the way it goes.

Jo waits a beat, not sure of how to answer this naked truth.

JO
Well, we don't have to worry about it now.

SKAG
(with humor, dryly)
For the meantime anyway. Everything's for the meantime. I found that out. Live one day at a time.

INT. STEEL MILL FURNACE #8 - DAY

The intensity of the flaming hearth hits us with an almost physical shock. We are seeing the screaming mouth of a Bessamer furnace, spewing flames sixty feet up through a hole in the roof. The noise is deafening...a thousand screaming banshees.

All conversation has to be yelled to be heard.

ANGLE TO SKAG

running to get wedges to position under a huge mold waiting to be cast in steel. The heavy iron wedges are strung together like a two hundred pound necklace on a chain. We see Skag begin to drag the wedges across the hearth floor toward the mold. David and Black Irish come running to his aid.

DAVID
Take it easy!

He and Black Irish drag the rattling wedges to the huge mold so rapidly that Skag is left behind.

ANGLE TO WHALEN

on opposite of the hearth, ready to position an identical mold. He yells above the din to his helper, an older man, Fletcher.

WHALEN
Look at that! They won't let him hammer a wedge. They're covering for him!

FLETCHER
They like him. I like him myself.

Whalen is hammering a wedge under his huge mold. He speaks between hammer blows.

WHALEN
I like him, too. So what?

FLETCHER
He's holding on. He'll fall apart if he doesn't keep the job.

WHALEN
So he'll fall apart. How long does a guy want to live! He's been foreman for eighteen years. Give a new guy a chance!

ANGLE TO SKAG

watching as Black Irish shakes the wedges aloose.

Skag comes forward with a shorthandled sledge, ready to drive a wedge into place under the mold.

But Puddler #1 takes the sledge out of Skag's hand. David lies prone to position the wedge securely so Puddler #1 can drive it into place.

CLOSE ON WHALEN yelling up to Fletcher again.

WHALEN
They don't want him to get his hands dirty!

FLETCHER
You don't mind if I sympathize with him, do you?

Whalen is walking away, yelling back over his shoulder:

WHALEN
I don't give a damn who you have sympathy for. There are two thousand guys who want this job and I'm going to get it! Why don't they just pack it in when the time comes?! Why does it always have to be the hard way?!

ANOTHER ANGLE - THE CATS

Huge tractors are being backed up and attached to the molds. Both Whalen and Skag jump to stand ready to make the linkage. Whalen, in a show of bravado, makes the linkage on his mold without help. Skag, on the opposite side of the hearth, has two puddlers to aid him.

HEAD ON SHOT

The cats start to move. The grinding noise of the huge molds, each one thirty feet high, sliding into position, is like a thousand fingernails going across blackboards. The molds shudder and shake. Skag's mold is in danger of tipping. We hear him screaming and see him gesture toward David:

SKAG
Get up there and tighten those clamps!

DAVID
(yelling up to cat driver)
Hold it! Stop it right there!

Skag looks across the hearth toward Whalen's crew. Their mold is moving into final position; ready to be poured. Skag shakes his head, throwing off sweat in a rain of diamonds that sizzle on the hot iron flooring.

CAMERA SWINGS to show Whalen, grinning like a fox, approaching from across the hearth.

WHALEN
(putting his mouth close to Skag's ear, having to scream it)
Hi, Skag. Your guys are falling behind a little, ain't they?

CAMERA MOVES TO DAVID. He senses the situation with Whalen and comes down from the mold, the big lug wrench in his hand gripped tightly.

SKAG
They'll make it up.

WHALEN
Maybe you see what I mean now. Your crew needs shaping up!

David comes over to them, looks at Skag warily.

WHALEN
They didn't move for me. Looks like they can't move for you either.

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WHALEN
They didn't move for me. Looks like they can't move for you either.

David looks at Whalen, alarmed and angry.

DAVID
What are you trying to do --?!

WHALEN
(ignoring David)
My men. They're all fired up and ready to explode. Watch out -- they don't blow you off the hearth!

Whalen goes back to his crew.

CLOSE UP - DAVID

alarmed. He looks at Skag, afraid that Whalen is reaching him.

DAVID
Don't let him needle you. We'll make it up. It's a long day. Pace yourself.

SKAG
Whalen's making a point of showing me up. They're way ahead.

DRAW BACK as he turns toward cat.

DAVID
So what? Don't let him get to you. It's only your first day back. You've got to be careful.

David goes back to the mold, hanging onto his wrench, using his body weight to tighten the bolts.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

looks at his crew.

SKAG'S P.O.V.

They are doing the job, but are obviously not up to their old standards. They seem to lack spirit. It is obvious that they miss Skag's old verve, his inspired leadership.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

his eyes move across to Whalen's crew.

SKAG'S P.O.V.

the contrast is obvious. They are not only sure of themselves, but they are smug, revelling in the competition, knowing they are ahead.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

wrestling with the feeling inside himself.

SKAG'S P.O.V.

giant catepillar tractor looms above him. The driver is leaning forward, waiting for Skag's signal.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

making a decision. He makes a big circle with his arm, slowly at first, then faster and faster.

SKAG
All right! We're going all out. Let's show these bastards how to make steel!

One of the men is hammering a wedge. It pops out. Skag runs to take the hammer away from him and position and pound the wedge himself.

SKAG
Keep it in line! Keep it in line! Give it some muscle!

He races to hammer wedges up and down the length of the mold, literally pounding them into position.

CAMERA MOVES TO DAVID

tightening the bolts that are holding the mold together. He hears Skag and turns inadvertently to look at him.

DAVID'S P.O.V.

Skag is jumping from place to place, still positioning and hammering the wedges underneath the moving mold.

CLOSE UP - DAVID

alarmed. Drops his lug wrench and runs toward Skag.

DAVID
(whispering feverishly)
Dad!

SKAG
I can't dog a job; I've got to find out if I can do it for <u>me</u>!

DAVID
(holding onto Skag's arm)
Dad. What the hell are you doing?

Skag pulls his arm loose.

SKAG
Making steel. That's what I do.

ANGLE CLOSE ON WHALEN AND FLETCHER

Whalen is moving fast, trying to keep ahead. He curses as one of his crewmen drops his crowbar and falls down.

FLETCHER
Hey, ease up, Whalen.

Whalen gestures across the hearth toward Skag.

WHALEN
Hell ease up! Let him ease up!

ANGLE FROM TOM IRISH, THE BLACK PUDDLER, ACROSS HEARTH

he makes an obscene gesture toward Whalen's crew, yelling.

BLACK PUDDLER
Whalen's a green man around here! Young and pretty don't make steel. Old Skag Iron's gonna change his diapers for him!

The men all laugh.

CLOSE ON WHALEN

shouting back.

WHALEN
I've got a present for that old man - a map to the old folks' home!

He returns the obscene gesture with his third finger.

CONTINUED

CAMERA returns to Skag's crew. They are now working furiously to the chanted verse of the black puddler:

BLACK PUDDLER'S VOICE (O.S.)
Who's the maddest of the mad?
Who's the baddest of the bad?
(the refrain from the crew after each line)
Sk...a...a...ag Iron!

CAMERA raises UP, UP, UP until we are at the very top, the very roof of the mill, to the superstructure. In the booth in the superstructure are the two engineers working the controls. They guide the enormous kettles, or cupolas, each one capable of holding ten or more tons of liquid metal, along the rails.

FIRST ENGINEER'S P.O.V.

From this lofty perch, the men on the hearth below are like ants in a sand box. First Engineer turns to Second Engineer who has just climbed up the ladder to the booth.

1ST ENGINEER
What the hell's got into everybody? Never seen them move like this.

2ND ENGINEER
Might never see it again. Skag and Whalen's going at it head to head to see who can pour and crack out first.

1ST ENGINEER
It never works out to put two crews on the job - who the hells bright idea was that?

ANGLE PAST THEM TOWARD HEARTH BELOW

We are seeing the puddlers working IN UNISON TO THE CHANT of Black Irish.

2ND ENGINEER
Somebody in the front office.
(pointing)
Those are twin screws for the biggest supertanker yet.
(laughing)
I guess some clerk must have thought, twin screws, twin crews.

1ST ENGINEER
(annoyed)
It's no joking matter. They're going to be pouring a gang of tons. Somebody could get hurt.

1ST ENGINEER'S P.O.V.

The Bessemer spewing flame right up to a hole in the roof. The noise is thunderous.

CAMERA zooms down in a dizzying electric fall into an enormous

CLOSE UP - SKAG

cups his hands to his mouth and yells upward in triumph, rotating his arm to the men high in the superstructure controlling the Bessemer furnace.

SKAG
Start it comin'!

On the far side, we see Whalen, a close second, also signalling.

SHOCK CUT to the big Bessemer furnace slowly rotating as if to destroy us, turning on its side to spew its liquid metal in a veil of fire into the waiting kettles. As soon as one kettle is filled, it moves on, making way for another.

WHIP CUT to show the puddlers below scurrying about under Skag's direction, ready with their stirring rods to receive the liquid steel...now beginning to pour from the kettles into the huge molds. We see Paczka controlling the speed of the travelling kettles. Skag is unable to be heard above the noise of the overhead crane. He directs the men by physically pushing them from place to place; he directs Paczka with gestures. The enormous kettle moves majestically overhead on a parallel track toward Whalen's mold.

CAMERA MOVES TO SKAG'S CREW

Skag refuses to take cover from the raining sparks, standing his ground to direct the operation.

CAMERA MOVES TO WHALEN'S CREW

Whalen is also standing in a rain of sparks.

At this exact moment, as their crews have all sought some kind of shelter, it is a picture of two almost heroic figures fighting it out down to the wire, mano a mano.

THE CAMERA ANGLE is such that the men are like larger than life statues of working class heroes contemptuous of death.

And then this magnificent moment is over.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

now black as a minstrel man, his teeth flashing white as he leaps away from the mold to scream up at Paczka.

SKAG
Keep 'em coming, you no good rock head!

He laughs explosively and moves back toward the mold with his stirring rod, ready for another pour.

CAMERA to Whalen's crew

Whalen pushes aside a member of his crew who is using a steel stirring rod to clear the white-hot metal from the mouth of the mold. Whalen begins to vigorously wield the stirring rod himself.

WHALEN
(shouting)
Step back! That's enough, that's enough!

Skag and David watch Whalen.

SKAG
I'll say one thing, he don't give up easy!

DAVID
(grinning, he moves away, giving the thumbs up sign)
Neither do we!

CAMERA pans UP, UP, UP once more to booth in superstructure.

1ST ENGINEER
Damn! That ol' hunkey can sure move his ass when he has to.

2ND ENGINEER
We ought to work all the crews head to head.

1ST ENGINEER
My heart wouldn't take it.

CAMERA zooms to

CLOSE UP - SKAG

he is directing his crew as they bring out the big hoses to wash down the molds. The hoses are tangled.

SKAG
Come on, straighten out those hoses!

Hawkins, the shop steward, nervous and officious, comes trotting forward.

HAWKINS
(screaming with rage)
You got to take your rest breaks! It's the rule.

SKAG
You're in my way!

HAWKINS
It took twenty years to get where we are now - the eight-hour shift, rest breaks, toilet time, pay by the house instead of the tonage...in one day you've thrown it all down the drain!

SKAG
(shaking hose suggestively)
Move it, or you'll get washed away with the rest of the crud.

The hose is turned on and Skag sends his first stream of water toward Hawkins. He takes to his heels screaming:

HAWKINS
You'll be up before the Disciplinary Committee this time for sure!

Skag's crew now spews water from enormous hoses onto the still white-hot mold.

CONTINUED

CREW'S P.O.V.

The entire hearth is suddenly enveloped in a grey fog. The billowing clouds of steam and the sound of water on hot stuff is a new phase. Now the hearth is like one big steam bath, billowing clouds obscure the men.

The men walk in and out of clouds of steam, appearing and disappearing like wraiths.

Skag, standing side by side, and his crew move forward to attack the mold with sledge hammers, cracking it down. They take short-handled picks and sledges and beat the crud and sand off of the finished casting.

A ragged cheer of triumph comes from Skag's crew. They throw their protective helmets into the air, jeering at the crestfallen workers across the hearth.

Among the men giving a cheer of triumph are the older men, the men in their forties and fifties. They have experienced a personal triumph in this competition because in this youth-oriented society they had been led to believe that they themselves would be relegated to the ash heap. It is one last moment of triumph over the young punks.

PACZKA
You young guys think everybody over thirty's ready for the scrap heap. Well, we ain't ready to turn it over yet!

PUDDLER #1
Sometimes an old dog can teach a young puppy to lay down and roll over!

FLETCHER
(the old man from Whalen's own crew)
...You'll get your own crew, Whalen, when you grow up!

Suddenly before them, the thing all of the men have been striving to bring forth is apparent to them.

HIGH ANGLE SHOT - THE GIANT PROPELLER

It rises out of the discarded rubble, a thing of beauty, an artform emerging from the discarded chrysalis.

CLOSE UP - GIANT PROPELLER

for an ocean-going supertanker.

For the first time we are able to see these steelworkers as men who are not just workers, but skilled craftsmen.

CONTINUED

CLOSE UP - SKAG

he looks up at it almost reverently, with a touch of awe. His eyes reflect the wonder of what his hands helped to fashion.

The other members of his crew gather around the great propeller as if they were connoiseurs viewing a work of art. The attitude in their eyes is not on their lips, they are steelworkers.

BLACK PUDDLER
Damn!

Whalen's crew, in spite of losing the competition, look at it with equal wonder.

WHALEN
(to Skag)
It's a big one!
(grudging admiration)
I guess you know you're crazy as hell.

SKAG
You're pretty crazy yourself.

WHALEN
You know, I'm still going to cut you if I get the chance.

SKAG
That's the way life goes.

Skag strides through the crew. The men straggle after him picking up the refrain from the black puddlers' chant:

BLACK PUDDLER
Who's the baddest of the bad?
(crew's refrain)
Sk...a...a...ag Iron!

Who's the maddest of the mad?
(refrain)
Sk...a...a...ag Iron!

Who's the best we ever had?
(refrain)
Sk...a...a...ag Iron!

David walks a step behind his father.

DAVID
Dad, you can't keep up this pace. You'll kill yourself.

SKAG
What the hell am I going to do? Run scared the rest of my life? I can't live half way.

PUDDLER #1
(coming over to Skag)
Skag, you're the greatest. My God, you just go on forever. Nothing's going to stop you.

CLOSE UP - SKAG

he has seen his own son desert him at the height of his illness; he has seen his own mortality; he has felt what it is to be impotent. He knows that one day it will all overwhelm him, but he is determined to live until that moment.

SKAG
(with irony)
Sure. I'm indestructible.

CAMERA follows Skag's face. In it all the pain of the men in this country who keep it going and wind up on the scrap heap one day without any thanks. Also in it is their glory.

SKAG
Okay, let's get this hearth cleared! Black Irish, get those hoses coiled and stacked! Comon' you puddlers, we got a furnace to load!

- FADE OUT -